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M E M O I R S

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N O V E L.

By Mrs. GUNNING.



IN FIVE VOLUMES.

V O L. III.

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MEMOIRS

OF

M A R Y.

LETTER XXXIII.

*Extracts from Lady Jane Petworth's Letter
to Lady Auberry.*

I Found the Duke fitting at his escrutoire,
and very busily employed in looking over
several papers. I use no ceremony in go-
ing to him when I please: his kindness
and affection to me at all times, relates
the tender respect in which he holds the

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B

virtues

virtues of my dear departed Sister, better than the most elaborate inscription that could be engraved on monumental marble.

The door being half open, I would have gone back when I saw him so much engaged, but having caught a glimpse of me before I could retreat, he called after me, and desired I would return.

I was never more glad to see you, Sister, said his Grace : so far from interrupting the business I am employed about, your presence will facilitate it.

I made no resistance : he held out his hand, and placed me in a chair next to his own.

There was in his manner a solemnity, and in his voice a languor, to which he was not usually accustomed. I thought, too, he looked pale, anxious, dejected. I felt shocked at an alteration so visible, and enquired eagerly if his Grace was unwell, or if any thing had happened to give him uneasiness.

I do

I do not think myself quite well, he replied, but I have no cause in the world for uneasiness. Perhaps you are alarmed to find me more serious than you expected. This change may be owing to the nature of my present employment. I have been occupied several hours on two subjects that must make a man thoughtful, if he ever thinks at all : the one, in arranging my temporal affairs ; the other, in bringing my mind to determine on a matter which is of greater importance to my successor than all the possessions to which he will be entitled at my decease.

Good God, my dear Duke, I cried, you talk of being ill, and you talk of arranging your temporal affairs : have you told the Duchess that you are indisposed ?

No, he replied ; and I must desire that you do not name it to her : you are the only person of my family to whom I confide myself on this occasion. My Wife's constitution is so exceedingly feeble, and her attachment to me so tender, that if I

was to tell her the sentence my friend Doctor ——— has announced to me, I should probably have to lament her loss before a disunion more desirable to myself might perhaps take place.

I was less astonished than afflicted, to hear him speak in this manner: had he been addicted to superstition, or in any way fanciful about his health, I should not have been half so much alarmed; but on the contrary, I have had such incontestible proofs that the firmness of his mind was not to be shaken, as made me believe him fully capable of his present great, yet strange, exertion of resolution. I love him for his goodness to me, and for his having made the best, the most exemplary of husbands, to my amiable Sister. Can you wonder then that a tear fell on my cheek, and that I was utterly unable to reply?

He did not augment my concern by appearing to observe it, but proceeded to inform me, in terms the most calm and collected,

collected, that the day before he had been seized very suddenly in the House of Lords with a giddiness in his head; had left his seat abruptly, and staggered towards the door, where he knew his servants were waiting. He remembered that they lifted him into his carriage; he also recollected that he bade them carry him to Doctor ———, but at the moment he was placed in his chariot, memory, sense, life, all forsook him; and he was taken out, apparently dead, at the house whither he had desired himself to be conveyed.

Doctor ——— was fortunately at home, and immediately opened the veins in both arms, not waiting to send for a surgeon to perform an operation so immediately necessary. The effort was attended with so much success, that in three hours his Grace was enough recovered to return home, where he said nothing of the accident that had happened, having before requested his physician, and commanded

his servants, to be silent on the subject. Nor were the family in Grosvenor-square surpris'd at so long a detention, as he often staid in the House, if any *debates* of consequence were going forward, to a very late hour.

But how, cried I, my dear Brother, pressing his hand, (for I thought at this awful moment he was quite as dear to me as if I had really been his sister,) how is it that you cannot suppose this sickness to be accidental, and that it will not be attended with the melancholy event to which you just now alluded?

I'll tell you, my kind Jane, said he, with a smile that penetrated to my very soul, because it spoke the language of conviction, I will tell you honestly, that on peremptorily demanding of my friendly Physician, whose skill has never been disputed, what was the nature of my disorder, and what might be its most probable consequence; he paid that respect to my understanding which is due to every
man

man who is neither a milk-sop nor a coward, by not endeavouring to conceal from me that the disorder was a stroke of apoplexy ; that I might survive a second *shock*, but that a third would terminate my existence.

And are you to take no precautions, I exclaimed, to prevent a second or a third attack ?

Yes, said he, I am under the best direction in the world, and will omit no means that he advises to prevent, or at least protract a second visitation. However, remember this secret must rest between ourselves. If I recover, well ; if otherwise, my poor Wife need not have her eyes opened to see my danger, which may be yet at a great distance ; and probably many years of *her* life would be embittered by the horrors of expectation.

Do not grieve thus, my good Sister, continued he (ah ! Lady Auberry, I could not conceal the sorrow that oppressed me), though I should like to live, I am not un-

willing to die. Doctor ——— advises me to try the Bath waters, and I mean to go there in May. You see, Jane, I do not suppose my summons to be so near as you seem to apprehend.

God forbid it should be near. But why, my Lord, would you put off the trial of the waters till May: if they are thought efficacious, why not try them immediately? The Duchefs, who is partial to Bath, will not be displeased with an excursion there at this season. Can you have a better pretence for your journey than to give her pleasure? Dear Duke, let me prevail for heaven's sake!

I cannot go sooner than May, Lady Jane. I have many affairs to settle before I leave London, and if you have the patience to listen to me, I will explain in part what they are. But before I begin, I must give you the satisfaction of knowing that your kindness and your company have already done me more service than I
expect

expect to reap from physical prescriptions of any sort.

His Grace made this obliging declaration in so chearful a tone of voice, and with so pleasant a smile, that one half of my fears vanished, as I observed the favourable change that had taken place on his countenance; and I waited his further communications with the greater avidity, because I suspected the two dearest of all my young friends would be the subject of them.

[Lady Jane Petworth, unlike the greater part of her sex, who hold it a duty incumbent on them to stuff more lines into a letter than the paper was made to contain, broke off at this place, concluding at the bottom of the third page, but continued the interesting conversation in another epistle, which was began immediately after she had finished the former, and which the Editor is determined to recollect for thy benefit, dear Reader.]

B 5

His

His Grace, proceeded Lady Jane, looking me steadfastly in the face, asked if I could or would tell him whether Miss Montague's affections had been engaged prior to her coming to London.

I answered, without hesitation, that two years ago I believed it was understood she was to have been the wife of Lord Auberry. This marriage would have been with the approbation of your Ladyship, I said, had it taken place; but that every such intention ceased on the part of the Earl, soon after he went abroad, at which time the attachment mutually ended, and never could be renewed.

Something like this my Wife has hinted to me; she had it too from the best authority—from herself; and yet I can hardly believe that any man would take upon himself to contradict a report that does him so much honour.

What contradiction, what report is it your Grace alludes to? If it be any thing in disfavour of Lady Auberry's granddaughter,

daughter, put it in my power to convince you, dear Duke, that her actions must be free from blame, whose soul is so pure, so spotless as Miss Montague's.

I give you unlimited credit for your assertion, as well as for the friendship you professed for my Ward, and I think perhaps quite as highly of her merits as you do; nevertheless, you must hear what I have to say, when I shall be as ready to lend you my undivided attention, and not only to ask your advice, but to follow it, as far as it may be consistent with the completion of a certain plan, which I have this morning finally adopted.

Lexington, continued he, is the son of my brother; Miss Montague is the daughter of my friend. I have long intended them for each other, provided, on seeing my Ward, I should find her person and accomplishments equal to the expectations I had sanguinely formed of what a young woman should be, who is descended from such a couple as was her lovely mother and

B 6

that

that elegant Montague, the friend of my
reper years, and the best companion of my
boyish days. I need not tell you, that
when I did see her, they were more than
answered; from which moment, what was
only before a wavering inclination, became
the most fixed and the most ardent of all
those wishes I was capable of forming for
the honour of my family and the happiness
of my nephew.

My wife was the only person I entrusted
with my private intentions, and she did not
disapprove them; nor were we displeased
to observe, that from the very first inter-
view, Lexington began to attach himself
to the beautiful mistress we had destined
for him. He thinks our views are directed
to another object, and I am persuaded has
never ventured to make any lover-like
speech, though we see plainly enough he
would have no other language to our ward,
if he did not fear our displeasure as well as
opposition.

It

It was more the Duchess's opinion than my own, that we should not, at least for the present, take away this forced restraint from his conduct: she is, you know, a very sensible woman, and there is nobody so proper as herself to manage an affair of this sort, in which delicacy is an indispensable requisite. I therefore, without enquiring into her reasons for keeping the young man so long in a state of painful suspense, consented to resign into her hands the arrangement of this business, only reserving to myself the liberty of hastening or retarding the completion of my work, as circumstances may lead me to think the one or the other most necessary to my determined plan of proceeding.

Now, my dear Jane, speak and tell me if you approve of my conduct on this occasion, I mean so far as it has yet been explained to you.

Approve it! I repeated in a transport of joy, oh, my Lord, who is there in the world

world that will not adore your goodness to these amiable young people, so worthy of your affection, and so deserving of each other!

Have you no fears, Sister, for Lexington's interest in the heart of Miss Montague:—I have too many on that score; divest me of them, and I shall be the most contented of men.

I would answer, I said, for the freedom of her heart at present, and that it would never be a man of fewer claims than Mr. Lexington, who could in future hope to make an impression on it. As for his interest, added I, with a smile, I have no fears; she already regards him as a brother; he is too handsome, too elegant, too like herself in all good dispositions, to run the least risk of being refused, where there is no pre-attachment to exclude his pretensions.

I would fain be persuaded, returned his Grace, that the case is as you represent it; and yet I have my doubts, that if Lord Auberry

Auberry ever did make addressees to my Ward, and was again to renew them, whether she would not still prefer him to Lexington.

If I know any thing of Miss Montague, my Lord, there are few men who would not find a more successful title to her esteem than Lord Auberry. But in the beginning of our conversation on this subject, I remember you dropped some hint of a report of a *contradiction*, and now I cannot but observe a particular stress laid on the word, *if*, when your Grace said, "*If* Lord Auberry ever did make addressees to my Ward?" Has not Miss Montague told the Duchess that he *did* make proposals, and that he *was* accepted? has not her Grace repeated it to you? can you, therefore—— I was proceeding, but he interrupted me.

I know what you would say, and I feel that I have been wrong in not acquainting you before with the reasons I have for my unsettled opinion. Whether Lord Auberry
did

did or did not offer himself to Miss Montague, is yet, I think, to be determined.

No, it is already determined, I replied with some warmth; and if you desire it, my Lord, I will give you instant proof that Lord Auberry did offer himself. A contrary supposition must not, cannot be supported even for a moment. I hastily drew out my pocket-book, in which was deposited your Ladyship's valuable manuscript, so humoreously entitled *Annals of Modern Love*, which would at once abolish all the Duke's scruples, and complete my triumph.

I put it into his hand, with an air of exaltation, and watched every turn of his countenance, whilst he perused and re-perused it with marked attention, and the strongest tokens of astonishment.

Having read the contents twice over, he folded and returned the paper to me; but instead of disclosing his sentiments, as I expected he would have done, he pulled the bell in silence, and on the entrance of
a ser-

a servant, he sent him off with a message to Mr. Lexington, signifying that his immediate attendance was requested; or if he happened to be gone out, then to leave word at his house, that his Grace should expect to see him in Grosvenor-square, as soon as he returned home.

I waited till he should break a silence to me so anxious, so interesting; though I pretended to conceal my emotions, and appeared to busy myself in replacing the letter in its former situation; but before I had put it up, he begged I would indulge him with another draught of the same cordial that had already administered so much to the relief of his spirits: and forgive me, Sister, added he, if I am unable to thank you till I have repeated the salutary dose.

Had he spoken a volume of eloquence, he could not have explained the workings of his mind more to my satisfaction; and as I gave him back your charming little history, I said, yes, dear Duke, I forgive you

you with all my heart, because I can as easily comprehend your silence as I could understand the language of any other man. Whatever your doubts have been, I see they are all cancelled. I see you are a convert to truth. You cannot refuse to credit such a voucher as Lady Auberry.

He looked delighted, but made me no answer, and began reading again, with the same or greater avidity than before. Sometimes he would stop for a moment, and sometimes I heard him mutter softly to himself, excellent Parent!—amiable Mary!—execrable ———! No name followed the last exclamation; but I knew there was only one that could supply the vacancy, and I filled it with that of Auberry.

I am indeed, cried the Duke, (giving me back the precious deposit) I am indeed the convert of truth; I revere the most respectable of her disciples, and I love the fairest of her daughters. In what a light have you made Lady Auberry and Miss Montague

Montague appear to me! If I wished for their alliance before, I am now more ambitious than ever to attain that honour; and on my Nephew's success, a great deal of my own happiness must depend. Be the date of my enjoyment short or long, as it may please Heaven to direct, I shall receive as the supremest of its blessing Miss Montague into my family.

A tear, but it was manifestly a tear of pleasure, strayed down his cheek, as he spoke thus of your grand-daughter; I could have accompanied it with many more of my own, but fearing to soften his mind too much for his present critical state of health, I contrived to suppress them, and requested he would explain to me on what foundation those doubts were raised, which had gained so much ground on his belief, and produced him so much uneasiness.

I will tell you, said his Grace; and when you have heard my apology, you may possibly not accuse me of being less candid than credulous, for though I could not absolutely

absolutely refuse to credit the word of a man, whose honour at that time I had no reason to suspect ; yet, it was quite as difficult for me to suppose the affair could have been misrepresented by Miss Montague to my Wife, particularly as the Duchess informed me she never was intrusted with the transaction as a matter of boast, but that it was revealed to her in consequence of a demand made by herself, which Miss Montague's ingenuous soul could not resist. When she gave up her secret, no sacrifice was meant to vanity, but it was the offering of an innocent and great mind, at the shrine of candour.

How sweet are the praises of those we love ! How infinitely dear to my affections is your fascinating Mary ! I hardly dared to breathe, for fear I might interrupt them. The Duke too was equally enlivened by his subject ; his colour revived, his eyes sparkled ; his whole countenance was altered, as if by enchantment, from what it appeared an hour before. In short,

short, I never saw him look better, I never saw him look so handsome, so animated, as at this moment. I could have wished, for his sake, that Miss Montague had continued much longer the exhilarating theme of his conversation, and the burthen of his song; but for my own sake, or rather for the gratification of my curiosity, I was not sorry when he proceeded to give me the following most astonishing particulars :

He said there had been reports circulating for several days, that Lord Auberry was not only engaged to Miss Montague, but that she was quite as much attached as himself ; indeed, added he, there are some who do not scruple to say the balance is greatly on the lady's side ; that her distance and reserve, when they happen to meet in public, is nothing more than a political manœuvre to keep the affair secret, as by getting about in the world, it may at last reach the ears of Lady Auberry, who, from private pique to his family, had set her face against that alliance, which
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the young people waited only for her ladyship's death to ratify.

It was not consistent with my designs in favour of Lexington, continued the Duke, that I should be totally regardless of such rumours as these, they militated against the interest he might hope to make in her affections, and against his future peace, neither of which could suffer, at least I thought so, provided I was properly cautious in my enquiries, before I permitted him to try his fortune—a trial which must subject him to the bitterest of all disappointments, if the different accounts I heard were founded on reality.

Had these reports come altogether from her own sex, I should have given them very little consideration; because, being less a man of words than of observation, I have remarked ever since Miss Montague has been my Wife's visitor, that all mothers who have daughters, and all daughters who have expectations, are alike averse to her perfections: but they reach-
ed

ed me through a channel less liable to objection; I heard them circulated by several men of whom I have a good opinion; such authority was not to be placed to the score of envy, hatred, or malice; however, perhaps they may have come to my ears in as doubtful a shape; through the medium of disappointment; for amongst many other propagators were Lord Selby, Sir James Melvin, and Lord Silvester, all lately rejected by my Ward. They have ceased to visit here, and decidedly attributed their want of success to no other cause than her preference for Lord Auberry.

I sometimes thought that I would ask Miss Montague herself, for the solution of what appeared to me a perfect enigma; but on re-considering her declaration to the Duchess respecting his Lordship, I was struck with the impropriety of giving a shock to her delicacy, by seeming to suspect her veracity. I had already applied to Sir Ashton Montague, who, from the habit

bit of friendship in which he lives with this reputed lover, was likely to give me the information I wanted; but I found him more reserved on the subject than I expected; and instead of abolishing my doubts, he only added fuel to the fire of my suspicion, by insidiously observing, that though he never intermeddled in the private affairs of his friend, he imagined it did not require a telescope to distinguish through the thickest veil of dissimulation which could be thrown over a lady's inclinations, that Miss Montague had no particular objections to Lord Auberry.

I could no longer keep silence, but cried out, Good God, what a villain is that Sir Ashton Montague! Assure yourself, my Lord, he was the original propagator of a report so injurious to the most generous and the most candid of human beings.

The Duke looked surprised, and asked if I had any particular foundation for my extraordinary supposition?

I con-

I confessed, that in the circulation of this curious fabrication, I had come in for as much, and perhaps, as early intelligence as his Grace; that I had asked no less than three young men, all of whom had seen and all admired Miss Montague, from whence they got their authority for supposing her under any sort of engagement to Lord Auberry, when every one of them gave up to me as their author Sir Ashton Montague, whose mischief is the more dangerous, because he has the undeserved honour of being her relation.

Well, replied the Duke, I must acknowledge, Jane, that however he might pique himself on being, in general, a man of honour, on the present occasion he has chosen the part of an incendiary and a rascal. But I am going to give you a proof that duplicity is not the vice of one man only in this singular age of craftiness; for, on my putting the question to Lord Auberry, whether or not he had any pretensions to my Ward, this was his positive reply—

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I never

I never gave Miss Montague reason to suppose it, my Lord, and must be excused from answering any further question.

This was a positive renunciation, and when he attested it, there was nothing like hesitation in his voice, or discomposure in his countenance to discredit my belief of its veracity; of course, I declared myself satisfied.

Now I appeal to you, Lady Jane, if my uneasiness has sprung from credulity; and if, on the solemn asseveration of Lord Auberry, I am not in part exculpated for harbouring suspicions injurious to the dear girl, in whom we are both so warmly interested.

I assured his Grace, that I not only fully acquitted him of being actuated by weakness, but that I adored the lenity with which he treated Miss Montague, when possessed of so strong a proof that her conduct must have been highly artful, almost beyond the extensive reach of mercy to have pardoned it.

I will

I will tell you, said he, how I felt, how I reasoned, and how I acted, after my interview with Lord Auberry; though I shall find it a difficult task to make you understand what have been my variety of opinions since that time, till the moment you put into my hand Lady Auberry's impartial representation of this still incomprehensible business.

For three hours after I had been with his Lordship, I did not see my Ward; it was a circumstance in her disfavour; the letter of credit she carries in her open countenance was not before me; I had no force to contend with Lord Auberry's assertion. I was more displeased with what I then thought coquetry in her conduct than I now like to recollect, as it raises a pang of regret for being at that moment, when I was condemning her of art, myself the dupe of artifice.

We met at dinner—our party was large—several young men, evidently attached to her, assisted to form it—they were

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placing

placing themselves at table. When I came in, Lexington and Lord Elderton were seated, one on each hand of her; but the moment I entered, she requested that one of them would move to make room for me. I took the chair she had caused to be vacated, and said to myself, this is not the proposal of a coquette, neither can a coquette look like a divinity presiding over, and regulating the pleasures of social enjoyments. In that light appeared Miss Montague, whose face was not more illumined by the artless smiles of good humour, than chastened by a sweet and modest composure, which, if not absolutely necessary to complete a fashionable beauty, we old men are apt to consider as the credentials of an innocent heart, uncorrupted manners, and the criterion of a superior understanding.

What a painter you are, my Lord, said I, how great the likeness, and how lovely the portrait you have just drawn of Mary Montague; yet this is only a talent, but
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the noble sentiment which left you open to conviction, may be called a virtue of the first lustre.

Perhaps, returned he, I deserve not all the applause you are willing to allow me, because my faith so often wavered. When I had the countenance of my Ward, or the beautiful simplicity of her actions, before my eyes, it was then she was faultless; but when they ceased to be the immediate objects of my contemplation, the words of Lord Auberry reverted to my mind, and I could in no manner account for them to her advantage.

Between two opinions it was a considerable time before I could determine what method to pursue, whether to hasten my projected design of uniting her to Lexington; or whether it would not be doing him greater justice to prevent the alliance from taking place. Why I at last concluded that it should proceed, at least without hindrance on my part, was a conversation I drew her into, of which I made Lord

Auberry the subject, without seeming to choose it from any particular motive, and on this occasion the propriety of her answers convinced me that if there had been any error on her side, it must have proceeded from mistake, rather than the mean and wilful desire of imposition.

Nothing of this matter has ever escaped my lips, but to yourself; for, though the Duchess is more partial to Miss Montague than I have ever seen her to any other young person, yet I thought it might probably weaken her interest in that quarter, had my Wife been instructed in the mysterious disavowal of Lord Auberry, so very contradictory to Miss Montague's own assertions; for which reason, I was silent on the whole transaction.

What a mountain of anxiety, Sister, has your presence removed from my mind, continued the Duke. I had, indeed, before you came in, made it up to letting the young people come together if they chose; but it was only a fight of
Lady

Lady Auberry's manuscript that could have completed my happiness in their union.

God be praised, said I, with as much thankfulness of heart as if a peculiar blessing from heaven had that instant lighted on my own head. And now, dear Duke, I am sure you will no longer impose restraint on your Nephew, or retard that event in which the felicity of so many is involved.

Not a moment will I retard it, he replied; I sent for Lexington with no other intention than to tell him he may do as he pleases; and that if he can prevail on Miss Montague to accept his proposals, the sooner he presents her to me as my niece the better I shall be satisfied. This, added he, was the very business which I just now told you would detain me in Town till May; for, after the warning I yesterday received of how short a date my continuance here may be, I determined, if possible, to witness the establishment of

my nephew before my final summons of surrender might arrive.

His Grace would probably have said more on the same subject, if the Duchess's carriage had not just then driven up to the door. We both rose and went to the window, from whence we saw Mr. Lexington dismount from his horse, first assist the Duchess to get out, and afterwards your lovely Mary, whose hand he did not think it incumbent on him to release, till he had led her to the room we occupied; nor did she seem to regret its being made the captive of so charming a conqueror.

[The Editor humbly hopes this specimen of memory will be thought sufficient by all descriptions of readers, as not another word in Lady Jane's letter is to be remembered.]

Mifs.

Miss Montague's Journal continued, six days of which are in the Catalogue of Papers stolen, or missing.

Feb. 28, 17—, Morning.

All the bustle and confusion of moving furniture from one place to another—driving us from one room to another, and turning the house quite topsyturvy, thank my stars, is at last over, and the arrangements for this one night's entertainment completed, in the most magnificent style that can be imagined. The Duchess tells me it will cost the Duke two thousand pounds. My God, what a sum! I could almost wish it better bestowed.

The wreaths which ornament the hangings have been tied up partly by me, and wholly under my direction. They were not finally fixed to their respective stations

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till

till four o'clock this morning, and it was impossible to get a wink of sleep till then for the unceasing noise of the hammers; my bed-room being immediately above that which was the last finished. I have not seen them since they were put up—I must however go now and take a peep at them, that I might be the better able to furnish out a sketch of the *tout ensemble*. I shall take Jenny down stairs with me, for I believe she is the only servant that is yet risen in the family.

It would divert you, dearest Grandmam, could you hear the simple remarks of my foster-sister on the preparations going forward: it was but yesterday she told me that there were more cooks and confectioners in the Duke's kitchens, than there were trees in the Great Park at Riverdale.

I have now been through the whole range of apartments, and can conceive nothing so like them in appearance as those descriptions of enchanted castles and fairy palaces,

palaces, which I have so often, and with so much pleasure, met with in the Arabian Nights Entertainments, a book of infinite imagination, always your favourite, and which my dear Miss Beauly tells me in her last letter, she now often reads to you, when you are fatigued with more abstruse subjects, and relax from more serious studies.

Where shall I begin—where end—I hardly know how to select particular traits of splendour, when every thing I look at is splendid.

White fatten, with deep gold fringe, are the temporary hangings of every room; the chairs, sofas, and even the benches, are all covered in the same superb style of magnificence; but the beautiful wreaths of roses, which have no other contrast to their brilliant colour, but their own green leaves falling on the white ground, produces an effect exceedingly pleasing, from the preservation of its singular simplicity in the midst of a thousand other attractive

C 6

objects,

objects, which convey to the mind ideas of grandeur only.

Of all the other embellishments, nothing pleases me so much as the white and gold frames, contrived to represent arches, which form a noble avenue from one room to another. These frames are made to support such a profusion of coloured lamps as must produce more than a double portion of meridian day, when they are all lighted.

The side-boards for refreshments are arranged from the top to the bottom of what I call the lamp-promenade, for there is space enough for two people to walk abreast on each side of the tables; and the arches being open, whoever does not choose to take refreshment within the avenue, may receive it from without.

I could still employ a long hour on my inventory of fine things, if, like a prodigal, I was inclined to spend all my riches at once; but I rather give the preference to that kind of œconomy which will leave
me

me something to regale you with when I return to Riversdale.

Dressing Time.

I have many subjects, some of one sort, some of another, to fill up my paper, though the Duchess's friseur, who is ordered to decorate my head for the evening, should take three hours in setting it out to the best advantage.

I began my journal* with an act of humiliation. I confessed the error which had once led me to suppose that the Duchess of Cleveland had less of kindness than of *hauteur* in her composition. I am more and more convinced, every day,

* Remember, Reader, the first six days of this Journal was lost,

that

that kindness is the constitutional property of her mind, which would have mingled with all her perfections in any soil but a Court, and in any school where the language of adulation had not been spoken. I should be the most ungrateful creature living, if I had not made this change in my first opinion, and the most unjust, if I had not declared it.

I again repeat what I have been saying for the last six days, that I am obliged to confess myself a bankrupt, in every thing but gratitude, to the Duke and Duchess of Cleveland ; for sure it will never be in my power to return that excess of goodness with which they have both distinguished me. Indeed my heart is quite penetrated by the dear indulgence they have granted me this morning—yes, my dearest, my beloved, my revered parent, you will very soon see your own Mary at your feet, and her gracious guardians, this charming Duke and Duchess, will themselves conduct her to you.

When

When I went down to breakfast, I found only Mr. Lexington in the anti-room. He has been so unwell lately, and so melancholy, that we have all been seriously alarmed about him. Without knowing what were his complaints, how was the remedy to be applied? He would have no physician; every body therefore was his physician, each having a different prescription, which would be sure to do him good; and I have heard him, in the course of an hour, advised to try twenty experiments: hot baths, cold baths, Bath waters, Bristol hot wells, a tour to the Continent, electrification, animal magnetism, and asses milk, have been each strongly recommended.

Richmond happened to be our drive yesterday morning; the Duchesse went there to give some orders about removing the hot-house flowers, which are to be placed promiscuously with the refreshments under the illuminated arches, and to form a magnificent pyramid, intermingled with
lamps,

lamps, as a termination to the grand avenue.

We had not been employed many minutes in giving our directions, and selecting those pans which were most adapted for the purpose of bestowing beauty or fragrance to our plan of operation, when we were quite unexpectedly joined by Mr. Lexington ; we kept him so busy for more than two hours, and gave him such animating exercise, by making him assist us to arrange the business in which we were so anxiously engaged, that to-day all his complaints are flown, and I never saw him look so well, so gay, so satisfied.

The whole merit of this wonderful cure does not entirely belong to our skill, or his own exertions; at least he would have me believe so. For you must know, he has confessed a secret to me this morning, and as he did not desire me to be silent, I think I may intrust you with it.

Mr. Lexington, then, has done me the honour to attribute all his indispositions, and

and all his solitary moments, to your poor Mary; her good opinion he wished to engage; he despaired of engaging it; which despair, he said, had oppressed his spirits, and preyed upon his health. In short, it was a very long and a very strange story that he told me; but the truth of it being fully attested by the Duke and Dukes, I had no reason to suspect its authenticity.

Dearest Grand-mama, I have referred him to you for my answer. Without your approbation I will enter into no engagement. With it, what objection can I form to a man, whose worth is universally acknowledged; whose person, understanding, and disposition, are of the first rate; and who distinguishes me from all the rest of my sex.

I believe Mr. Lexington is not in despair that I have placed my fate in your hands, as I see no abatement in his spirits, or perceive any thing like discontent in his countenance. The Duke thanks me
ten

ten times in a minute, for what he calls my generous candour, that will not keep in suspense the man who adores me. The Duchess embraces me, and says, I shall supply to her the place of a daughter: and for the last hour, we have talked of nothing but of our excursion to Riverdale, which they assure me shall be in less than a month. What a prospect is this for your Mary! I verily believe, had a stranger come in upon us by surprise, it would have been difficult to decide which of our little party was the most happy, where all were superlatively happy.

Lord Auberry, I suppose, has been giving himself airs about me; and my reasons for thinking so are many: first, that when or wherever I meet him, which is almost every day, he looks as sternly at me, as if I had injured him in a manner never to be forgiven. Have I injured Lord Auberry? Is it injury to pardon him, unasked, the wrongs he has done me? Is it injury still to wish for his happiness

pinefs, who has attempted to destroy my peace? None of thofe furely are offences. But perhaps he makes me accountable for the fame opinions I once entertained of him, and choofes to forget the radical cure his own conduct adminiftered to my weaknefs. I have no doubt that he expected I fhould exhaust my whole life in performing funeral obfequies to the memory of his departed vows. Perhaps too, his vanity is piqued and himfelf injured, in his own opinion, in finding me a rational woman rather than a defpairing, forfaken heroine. There are miftakes which might eafily be adjusted, whenever his Lordfhip condefcends to beftow a moment's ferial reflection on what he was, what he is, and what I am.

Had he never known the fountain from which I draw every right principle I poffefs; had he never known Lady Auberry, he *then* might be excufed for fupposing that when I was inftructed to dance, play, and fmg; to draw, paint, and fpeak the
languages,

languages, my education was completed. How to distinguish between honour and dishonour; how to be firm as well as yielding; how to be the guardian of my own repose, without knowing you, he might have imagined were the only lessons omitted as unnecessary, in forming the mind of a girl whose situation seemed to preclude her from insult, and intitle her to respect.

Ah, how blessed is your Mary! Has not the horror of her fate been averted by your goodness, by your wisdom? Precept, theory, example, all conspired to impress those characters on my mind, which, like divine talismans, have guarded it from false, from dangerous impressions, and enabled me not only to recal that partiality, which has been once misplaced, but to present the most estimable of mankind with a heart as free from former prepossession, as if it had never owned any other master than himself.

The

The manner in which this strange Lord Auberry behaves, when we meet in public, is so unaccountable on the score of wounded pride, and perhaps a wounded conscience, as that he should himself have been the person to announce to an inquisitive world, on what footing he had been once received at Riverdale. Who else could have told it? Not the Duchefs or Lady Jane, I am sure ; and these were the only two persons with whom I ever entrusted my confidence ; yet I find it is as much known, as if it had appeared in a gazette, extraordinary.

I cannot bear any thing that has the appearance of reserve, where unreserve is not only a debt, but a duty ; I shall therefore desire Lady Jane to explain the nature of my engagement to Lord Auberry, fully and clearly to Mr. Lexington ; perhaps he may hear the reports which I am convinced are in circulation, and hear them told to my disadvantage. But was I sure they would never reach his ear, I would

would still deal with the same openness, that hereafter the sin of concealment may not rise up against me as a subject of reproach.

The Duke, some days ago, talked to me of Lord Auberry. His enquiries had no singularity in their tendency, and yet I thought he made them with a degree of anxiety that almost persuaded me he was more than commonly interested about my former acquaintance with his Lordship. But after all, it is very likely these ideas of mine are merely chimerical; for his Grace has never spoken of him once since that time; and neither he or the Duchess, I am pretty well convinced, know half so much of what is whispered about in their own circle as I do.

The first indication I had of Lord Auberry's imprudence, in making me the subject of conversation on his own account, I received from Mrs. Oxburn, who, looking me confidently in the face, asked with a malicious smile, how it happened

pened that I did not make my cousin take more care of his person : for of all things, added she, I hate a sloven.

I never before heard him accused, said I, of negligence ; nor do I suspect Mrs. Oxburn of possessing that troublesome sort of *mauvais honte*, which would prevent her from making the application to *himself*, if she saw any thing that displeased her in the dress or address of Sir Ashton Montague.

Oh, my dear, replied the confident creature, pretending to laugh at my misapprehending her, you are prodigious wise, or prodigious artful, not to understand that I mean Lord Auberry.

It might be one or the other, it is a matter of perfect indifference to me, I replied, (vexed to death at her impertinence) I know so little of either.

Hush, child, cried she, laying her hand on my lips, don't throw away a bushel of lies when one truth will do as well : and so, my little innocent rural dear, you know nothing of the poor disconsolate
Auberry ;

Auberry ; upon my life you are too cruel by half ; if he should hang himself, how will you like to be visited by his ghost at midnight ?

Your accusation, and your assertion, Madam, are both very extraordinary ; I must suppose them founded on some sort of authority, or that your imagination is even more fertile than your wit is either pointed or brilliant.

I said this in a tone of displeasure bordering on ridicule ; but she took no notice of my ill-humour, and replied (laughing louder than before), Yes, yes, Miss Montague, my authority is quite as good as if I had been admitted to your little snug party at Riversdale two years ago ; for though I am not, prude enough to be flattered with your sentimental confidence, there are others who may think me worthy to keep their secrets.

More and more provoked, particularly to be made the subject of satire by means of Lord Auberry, I answered, I have no secrets,

secrets, madam ; or if I had, the specimen you give of your qualifications to be the keeper of them, would certainly not encourage me to lodge them with you for security. But, perhaps, I added, the person who brought you the information may also have commissioned you to insult me ; if so, the offence you commit is only against good manners, and a breach of trust may be quite out of the question.

I turned from her in resentment, and since that time I do not think we have spoken three words together.

This is not the only mortification I have met with on the same score ; for though Lord Auberry continues to treat me with as little consideration as I bestow on him, I can see plainly enough that it is pretty generally supposed we are still attached to each other. It has happened more than once, that when his Lordship and Mr. Lexington were both near me, I have been asked, *Which is the man ?* Not Lord Auberry, I could have answered with cer-

tainty ; but my union, whenever it takes place with Mr. Lexington, will, I hope, remove from the open-eyed world an error that does me no honour, and will be of very little credit to the character of my noble relation, at least if steadiness of principle is considered as necessary to the reputation of a fine gentleman.

On the first night of my going to the Opera, I mentioned my surprise at two glasses that were levelled at me from an opposite box ; and that this circumstance made such a deep impression on my memory, as to occasion a very frightful dream, or rather vision, in which I fancied myself a martyr to assassins of my own sex. These ladies, who were then the objects of my terror, are since numbered with those who profess themselves to be my friends.

What reason I have to doubt the reality of these flattering professions I am going to tell you, but must first explain who they are, and who they belong to.

They

They are not ladies of title, but Hon. Misses. Their father is of a new creation; remarkably good and kind to me wherever he sees me: indeed, he seems to profess universal philanthropy, and I am not a little proud of being his acknowledged favourite. Such is Lord Dawn. He is, I am told, the best family man in the world; he adores his Lady, and is the most indulgent of fathers. Lady Dawn, though the mother of a grown-up family, has many personal advantages over her daughters; she is still beautiful; they are plain; she has a fascinating softness in the tones of her voice; all her movements are easy, natural, and graceful; the young ladies are masculine, intrepid, and affected. Dear Grandmama, do not accuse me of injustice, or ill-nature, in giving you this description of the Miss Dawns; they hate me, and I have a right to give you my opinion of them; I overheard them not three nights ago using my name with more freedom than truth or respect.

D a

Lord

Lord Elderton, with whom Miss Dawn has taken indefatigable pains to make it be believed that he is the captive either of her charms or her fortune, said to me, when their corner conversation was ended (to which, he confessed, he had been listening with attention), What powers, what accomplishments, what virtues must that woman possess, who can supply a magnet to a dozen of her own beautiful sex, strong enough to reduce them from their unceasing work of captivation, and make them forget, that, whilst they impannel their heads like a jury, giving verdict against a more lovely thief than themselves, they are losing the precious moments of conquest ! How happens it, charming Miss Montague, that you are never to be met with in those good-natured *retiring* parties ?

Fully understanding his Lordship's intending from what I had heard myself, though he was too polite to tell me absolutely that I had been the subject of their

their conversation, I replied with a smile, it is because one's name, on some occasions, may contribute more to the amusement of these select parties than one's presence. If we were all devourers, where would be the food for scandal?

My hair is finished; but of what my head-dress, or the habit I am to appear in is to be composed, I cannot tell you, because I do not yet know myself. I have entreated, with my own whole little stock of eloquence, the Duke and Mr. Lexington have added all their force to strengthen my petition, the purport of which was, that this being my first masquerade exhibition, I may be indulged with wearing a domino.

A mitigation of that sentence, which had before condemned me to sustain a character, was all that could be obtained; and her Grace said she would think of some fancy dress, in which I should be as little incommoded as if I was to hide myself in a domino; but she had no notion

of permitting young people belonging to her to make themselves dowdies at any time, particularly on her own night. She desired I would have my hair dressed before dinner; and when it was time to put on my habit in the evening, it should be done in her apartment, that nobody but herself may know under what disguise to find me. If Lexington, continued she with much good humour, fails to distinguish you through all disguises, we will give him no assistance, and he must lose the opportunity of entertaining you, which will be his punishment for wanting the keen-sightedness of a lover.

The last bell has rung—I have only time to wipe the powder from my face, before I go down.—Yes, but I must tell you that I saw an advertisement in the newspaper yesterday, offering twenty guineas for a ticket of admittance to her Grace's masquerade; the ticket to be left, and the money paid at the bar of some coffee-house, I forget where. There are above
right

eight hundred already issued ; but the Duchess, supposing the person who was inclined to give so large a sum to obtain a single ticket must be a man of rank, whose name was not on her visiting book, has ordered one to be sent to the appointed place, with particular directions to the servant who carried it, that no money was to be taken by him as a gratuity, or any questions asked ; a specimen this, not only of her politeness, but of that marked and liberal attention, with which she is always disposed to consider strangers.

Feb. 29th.

The friendly pillow of repose did not receive on its soft bosom the half-distracted head of your Mary till the clock had struck six this morning, since which I have slept four hours, though not undisturbed ; even busy fancy renewed the scene I had

so lately quitted. But what became of those delightful dreams which, in moments of tranquil rest, have so often transported me to Riverdale, and restored me for whole nights together to the society of its beloved inhabitants ? These sweet images were all driven from my fatigued imagination : to them have succeeded phantoms of distorted and unnatural figures, that, whether sleeping or waking, must ever create horror, if not disgust.

It is wonderful ! how can I account for it ? that though the sleep I have enjoyed was disturbed, broken, and agitating, yet I am as much refreshed, now that I am risen, as if I had slept twelve hours : neither head-ach or ennui have I to complain of ; my getting up so early this morning is a proof of my health ; and to ascertain the good condition of my spirits, I am about to give a detail of all that I can remember of yesterday's transactions. The scene of confusion is no more before my aching eyes ; and now that I am got
out

out of it, I shall feel much more pleasure as a mere relator, than I could possibly participate of as an ostensible actor.

Dinner was served up in the Duke's small cabinet, which seems to be the only corner in the whole house reserved for the purpose of comfort; every other apartment being laid out for the reception of splendour, and her train of satellites.

This dear little room had a particular claim on my affections, when I compared it with its more august neighbours; it was that sort of claim, which an unassuming child would have on my heart, if I saw her sisters caressed, loaded with favours and finery, whilst she modestly retired from the gaze of admiration unnoticed, unthought of, despised, and neglected.

Our repast was in style with the apartment in which we assembled. The only visitor who joined us there was Mr. Lexington; the attendants two, instead of twenty; we could not admit more without incommoding ourselves: short courses, a

D 5

desert

desert in miniature, much ease, much good humour, and much happiness, was the result of the whole *petite arrangement*.

We did not separate till near nine o'clock; the doors were to open at eleven; Mr. Lexington went home to dress; when her Grace took me to her bed-chamber; that too was laid out for company, the bed being placed behind the arras of white satin, which was so contrived as to leave a space sufficient for the business of the toilet; and here it was that we retired to put on our habits. The Duchesse stopped in her way to adjust something that caught her eye in the ornaments as she passed by them, bidding me go forward, and not attend to what *she* was about.

Mr. Lexington, at the request of the Duke, had given us several songs after dinner. You know, dear Grandmama, I have no notion in the world of turning a tune, but when the Duchesse bade me go on before her, forgetting my own inability, I tried to sing, or rather did most completely

pletely murder, a very pretty air beginning thus :

“ If 'tis joy to wound a lover,

“ How much more to give him ease !”

the tune and words of which had both infinitely pleased me ; when, in the very act of massacre, entering her Grace's bed-chamber, I uttered a faint scream, and thought I should have fainted. It is impossible I should tell you what sort of emotion I felt, when I saw sitting up just within the door a masked figure, dressed all in black.

Lady Jane Petworth, for it was her whose presence had thrown me into this sudden consternation, flew towards me, and said (taking off her mask), My dear child, what is it that alarms you ? Did you not expect to find me here ? Surely the Duchess must have told you that I came so early in consequence of a message from her, and at her own request.

D 6

I did

I did not know a word of the matter, I replied; and never before having seen any body so disguised, I was frightened almost out of my senses. But dearest Lady Jane, rejoiced as I am to be so agreeably surprised, I have still a little part of my mind occupied by curiosity, to find out why the Duchess sent for you to come so soon.

That will easily be explained, I dare say, my sweet Mary, said she, I suppose it is to tell me what I have already heard from the transported Lexington, of your having made him the happiest of mankind.

Hush! cried I, for Heaven's sake!— There was not time for another word— Her Grace came into the room; I heard her cough, which made me give her the caution of silence. She took Lady Jane under the arm, pretended to lead her through the other apartments, as if to ask her opinion on their decorations, but I rather think it was to acquaint her with my good fortune.

... . They

They were absent about ten minutes, and when they came back, we all retired behind the scenes, for so I think the receptacle for our toilets might be properly called, where our women, I mean two of the Duchefs's, and my poor Jenny, waited to put on our habits.

Jenny would certainly have been as great a fool as her mistress, and screamed at sight of Lady Jane, who, at my request, had replaced the mask on her face, if the presence of my Lady Duchefs, whom every body seems afraid of, had not been a restraint on her terrors.

I can now laugh at my own fears, as well as at her's, for after all there was nothing very formidable in her Ladyship's appearance; she only represented a lady abbess, and had taken the character, she said, at the request of Miss Fortescue, who, with her two cousins, Lady Bell and Lady Bridget Langton, besides three or four more of their young friends, were to form a groupe of nuns, and to be left under her
care

care by the Marchioness of Stars, who, being an invalid, proposed returning home at an early hour.

I do not understand, replied the Duchess, what business her High Mightiness has to come out at all? we can do extremely well without her; she had better not trouble other people with her made-up maladies; a masquerade is no nursery for sick folks. God forgive me, but I have hardly Christian charity for that discontented old Queen of Scraps, or her envious daughters. I have provided a strong mask for Miss Montague, or her eyes might be in danger, should they discover which way Lexington's are directed. My deep-diving Lady Marchioness has been in pursuit of him for a son-in-law before her girls were out of their leaders, though, poor things, they have been quite as industrious as their mother since they came to the years of *discretion*, if any such time is marked on our present fashionable calendar. But come, added her Grace, getting

ting up from the side of the bed, where she had seated herself, let us begin to think of making ourselves ready.

I ventured to wish my dress might not be *very* fine, or very fantastical ; and the Duchess, who is now always in good humour with me, was not displeased with my freedom, but bid me be quite at ease on that score, for as soon as she discovered my strong predilection for a domino, she had dropped, she said, her own idea in conformity to my taste, and only carried on the deception merely to puzzle her nephew, to whom she had hinted I should be the *very finest* mask of the night.

It is probable, continued her Grace, that by sending him on a false pursuit, those tender things he means only for you, will be addressed to some Sultana, or Persian Princess, or perhaps to more than a score, who he may suppose to come under my vague description ; so that, instead of possessing the happiness he is running after, in the very act of seeking it he will
chance

chance to bestow his tender speeches on many a self-created divinity, whose shrines are always prepared for the offerings of young men's prayers and praises.

But I hope you will let me be known to the Duke, said I?

Either Lexington is much obliged to you, or you are the worst of all plotters, she replied; it would be a mighty wise manoeuvre indeed, to tell the Duke.—No—had I entrusted the one with my secret, I might have as well revealed it to the other; and, for want of management, a very good jest would have been totally spoiled.

I did not say another word, for fear her hint about Mr. Lexington might be carried further, and she might really suppose I wished to reveal myself to him by means of the Duke: but delighted beyond all expression at her Grace's condescension, in permitting me to wear a domino, I sat down with joyful alacrity to have the form of my hair changed from what it had been

at

at dinner, because it was observed by the Duchess that then Mr. Lexington examined it with marked attention, as if he had hopes of finding me out by the manner in which it was pinned up, or the shape of a curl. My domino was pale green trimmed with white, the least remarkable colour, she said, and what there would be more of that night than of any other.

On my expressing a wish, if possible, to find out what would be the dress of Mr. Lexington, Lady Jane said, she knew he had fixed on the character of a Barrister; for when he called upon her yesterday, finding she was engaged with her lawyer, he had bid her reserve all the questions she meant for Counsel till this evening, when he might be heard of in Grosvenor Square, where he should attend for the benefit of clients, and give his opinions gratis.

Our dresses were on in a moment. Never did I pass two more agreeable hours than those before the company began to assemble. How very charming the Duchess

chefs can be when she pleases. I received my directions how to conduct myself, and amongst a thousand other charges, she forbade me from speaking to her, at least for the first two hours; for, said she, if you are often coming up to me, and sticking yourself at my side, Lexington will soon enough discover you; neither was I to hang about Lady Jane, that would answer the same end. There was no possibility of harm happening to me in her house, I must therefore take my chance, and mix with the multitude.

Another of her Grace's contrivances to prevent me from being known, was, that instead of waiting in any of the rooms to shew I belonged to the family, Lady Jane should conduct me by a back way, which led from behind the arras to the entrance hall, where I might mix with an hundred other masks, who would be rushing in at the same time.

Besides all these precautions, there was another which I have not yet mentioned;
this

this was a large bead fastened to the mask, which bead I was made to hold in my mouth, and it altered my voice most effectually, which otherwise, she said, must betray me, for she was sure I should not long give myself the trouble to disguise it.

Looking on the quantity of paper I have already scribbled, and thinking how much more I have still to cover, I ask myself those two natural questions, Will not my readers at Riverdale yawn over so much of it?—Shall I have time to finish before I go down to breakfast?—My heart gives a negative to the first, and my watch instructs me that I have yet an hour and half unexpended, so I hope to conclude my long history in time to carry it with me; and when I have got the Duke to give it a free passport, I shall send it off, as I am sure the immoderate size to which it will then be increased must preclude the necessity of its being detained for a companion.

Her

Her Grace of Cleveland appeared unmasked in the reception room on the first annunciation of arrivals, but we remained behind long after she was gone ; and at last, when we introduced ourselves, it was in the manner she had appointed, and we mingled in the hall with at least thirty of the most grotesque figures the human imagination can depicture.

The first idea that took possession of my distracted brain on seeing forms so unnatural, on hearing sounds so incomprehensible, must, I should suppose, resemble the feelings of a person thrown on a desolate island, who, in a moment, finds that he is surrounded by all its savage and monstrous inhabitants.

Lady Jane quitted me as soon as we had rushed in with the multitude, and in losing sight of her, my terrors became almost insupportable. I saw nothing but eyes—eyes that glared upon me like burning meteors ;—some appeared to scowl with

with contempt, some to threaten mischief, and all had to me the expression of ineffable horror.

In vain I attempt to describe my sensations; for ten minutes they were undecipherable. The first friendly circumstance, by which I was roused to some degree of reflection, that told me these were all rational beings, and that my fears were ridiculous, was Mrs. Tovey—*charming! charming!*—who was haranguing a party at no great distance from me. She was talking in her own natural voice, which, on this one occasion, sounded sweeter to my ears than sounds the Shepherds pipe in the valley of echo.

Encouraged by knowing, and being known to a person so near me, I crept still nearer; and though I did not yet venture to speak, I listened with attention, and heard her say, in continuation of something she had been saying before—

My Lady told me she should come; but my Lord will not rise till late—don't you know

know this is the day on which he is to make his very best speech? And so you must not expect to see my Lady here, till my Lord comes with her.—But where is the poor dear Duchess?—Well, to be sure, this is the finest assembly! the lights are so becoming!—I must go and find out her Grace.—Every thing in such taste!—Well, it is charming! and so like the Duchess and Miss Montague—Where is Miss Montague?—With her Grace to be sure.

And away she niggled.

I wish *I* could be sure of *that*, said a voice from behind me, I have been ranging the rooms this hour, and will swear there is no Miss Montague with the Duchess of Cleveland, unless she has made it a point to hide her understanding, as well as her countenance.

Perhaps she has none to hide, said I, plucking up courage, on seeing it was only a domino that I was to encounter; but frightened at the sound of my own voice,
I did

I did not wait for an answer, getting off as far and as fast as I could, from the person to whom my observation seemed a sort of challenge to begin a conversation: and, at the moment, I was half resolved not to utter another syllable the rest of the evening. At this time the rooms were not full, the doors had not been open more than half an hour, and few characters had yet made their appearance.

I looked about me, in hopes to find out Mr. Lexington, under his lawyer's gown and immense wig; but, though I could not discover him, I saw the Duke of Cleveland sitting down, his face uncovered, and in his usual dress. A number of people stopped in their various pursuits to pay him a short compliment, and then passed on without further incommoding him.

What a sight was this! What a rest would it have been to my fluttering heart and agitated spirits, if he did but know that I was so near him! I could have
flown

flown to him—I could have said, dear Duke, take me under your protection—the Duchess drives me from her—Lady Jane abandons me—every body she wishes attached to her, have deserted your poor Mary!

The serenity and sweetness of his features, invited me so kindly to put myself under his guardianship, that I felt inclined to risk her Grace's displeasure, by committing a wilful act of disobedience; but, being hindred in my approach towards him, by the current which bore strongly that way, I had time to consider what I was going to do; and, convinced that it must be a long while, if ever, before her Grace would forgive my neglect of orders, I changed my plan, and instead of betraying myself to the Duke, I was content to take the vacant seat on the same sofa he occupied.

I considered my present situation as a school, in which I might receive the first rudiments of masquerade education; for,

as

as I could feel no restraint in speaking to the Duke, I thought it was not impossible, after such a training, but before the evening was over I might be able to answer, or even to ask a question, without being thrown into the shivering fit of an ague, something like which I had experienced on my first effort of eloquence.

In summing up the advantages likely to occur from my neighbourhood, I had forgot one very essential bar to the progress of my improvement ; I might indeed have talked as much as I pleased to the Duke, but poor dear man, I should have remembered that he would never have enriched my fund of knowledge by any remarks of his own ; for at all times if he happens to be forced into conversation with strangers, such efforts are ever attended with disappointment to them, and pain to himself, from the invincible reserve of his disposition : he was always disposed to listen, but I must have made myself known to him before I could hope to receive a reply

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that would consist of more than a smiling affirmative, or a quiet negative.

I possessed my new post with abundant ease and satisfaction to my own feelings ; I soon recovered my speech, and used it to so much purpose, that the dear Duke began to shew symptoms of weariness at my flippancy ; for having no fears in whatever I said to him, I chattered away till, by his frequent yawnings, short answers, and half-closed eye-lids, I saw plainly that I should soon drive him out of his peaceful quarter.

Already he had wriggled as far from me as he could, and was drawn to the very brink of the sofa, from whence I expected to see him decamp at the first momentary interval of silence I might have inadvertently given him to cover his retreat ; for though he wished to get rid of me, he was too polite to quit his station, whilst one question succeeded to another as fast as I could utter them.

This

This little playful manœuvring had a good effect on my courage. I thought all my difficulties were fairly got over, and now I rather wished to be spoken to than to retire from observation; when, on the moment I was congratulating myself on my acquisition of spirit, a mask, in a blue domino, came up to the Duke, and, taking him by the arm, drew him away a few paces, but not so far as to throw me at a greater distance than I could conveniently hear what was passing between them.

I soon discovered, that this new acquisition to our *tete-a-tete* party, was no other than Mr. Lexington, who, in his own voice, complained bitterly that he could no where find me out, or prevail on the Duchess to give him the smallest hint to assist his researches. Is it possible, said he, that your Grace can be quite as much in the dark as I am?

It is, upon my honour, or I would have told you long ago, returned the

E 2

Duke.

Duke. However, added he, in a lower key, set yourself down patiently, *if* you can, by the mask I have escaped from, whose eternal tongue has sufficiently done me up, whilst I go and try what is to be made of your Aunt; perhaps she may tell me the secret she will not disclose to you; therefore, let me find you here at my return.

The Duke went off, and Mr. Lexington took the place he had quitted, but did not seem to think it incumbent on him that he should contribute to my entertainment, any more than my former companion.

He had thrown his head against the back of the sofa, and was fallen into the profoundest train of meditation, from which he started, on my venturing to ask him if he did not think a masquerade the most charming of all amusements?

No, faith, he replied, I have not found it so charming as you think it: but now that I am roused by your sweet tones, I expect

pect to change my opinion—The Duke of Cleveland has just been saying to me, you are the best companion in the world.

Aye, retorted I, you say true, for I overheard the very words in which this very flattering compliment to my poor talents was delivered to you by his Grace.

The devil you did—Why then, Madam, since that is the case, we will, if you please, say no more on the subject.

I am not in the least offended—but suppose then we talk of Miss Montague.

Miss Montague!—Direct me where to find her, and I will worship you as a divinity.

I certainly think I am able to direct you, if the Duke should be as unsuccessful a suppliant to the Duchess as yourself; but you must remember his Grace's injunctions, and not stir from my side till he brings you back the event of his embassy.—I submit to assist you on no other condition.

He made me no immediate reply, and I

saw him examine my hair with so much accuracy, that I rejoiced the form of it had been changed from what it was when I sat down to dinner; it was then curled and pinned up; it was now without curl, and spread over my shoulders; and yet when I saw the strictness of his scrutiny, I trembled, and felt very awkward from the idea that he had guessed too well for my imaginary security. Resolved to know my doom, whether I was or was not detected, I asked if there was any thing very peculiar in the construction of my head-dress, because I could not but remark he paid more attention to that than to the obliging offers I had made to direct him where he might find Miss Montague.

I had a momentary suspicion, said he, but it is gone. You *are* acquainted then with Miss Montague—*perhaps* you are Lady Jane Petworth?

And suppose I was Lady Jane, what would you say to me?

Oh!

Oh! said he, I would talk to you of my adorable Mary! And if you knew under what mask she is to be found, I would drag you from room to room till you had brought me to her. He had got on his feet, caught hold of my hand, and was nearly going to do what he had threatened.

You are mistaken, Sir, I am not Lady Jane Petworth. I withdrew my hand, and was again re-seated.

I will go, cried he impatiently, and see what is become of the Duke. If he does not succeed with the Duchesse, remember I am to gain my information from you.

O! to be sure, said I, and I shall wait till you come back; or if, in the meantime, I should happen to change my situation, I would advise you to look for Miss Montague under a religious habit.

You must be in the right, he replied; and none but a blockhead, like myself, would have been deceived so long. I deserve my punishment, and will try to retrieve my error.

I saw Lady Jane coming towards me, as he mingled with the crowd. We were rejoiced to meet, though but for a moment. I told her what had passed, and that Mr. Lexington would, probably, take her in the road of his pursuit.

We spoke very low, and it was a fortunate circumstance that we did so; for, more than once, she so far forgot herself as to call me Miss Montague; and every part of the house was, by this time, so stuffed with listeners and spectators, that some of them must have caught the sound, had it been above the compass of a whisper.

Before I parted with Lady Jane, I asked if she did not think it was proper that I should go and shew myself to the Duchesse? but she advised me to defer my intentions a little longer. When we separated, I did not go back to the Duke's sofa, but walked from room to room; and, at last, sat down in one, the farthest from that I had come from.

In

In my promenade, I passed the Duchefs of Cleveland—it was by mere accident ſhe did not let me go by her unnoticed—I ſlid my hand into her's—ſhe preſſed it affectionately; and, putting her face cloſe to my ear, you are a charming girl, whiſpered ſhe; I have had the beſt poſſible accounts of you, both from the Duke and Lexington; I am enchanted with you; keep up the ball; preſerve our ſecret, and leave me as faſt as you can.

I am now arriving at an incident, which I think was the moſt remarkable of any that occurred, from the beginning to the end of this, to me, ſtrange and wonderful evening—I have ſaid nothing of the characters, which were in a very ſmall proportion ſcattered through the immense multitude of dominos, that prevailed in every apartment.—I do not paſs them over in ſilence becauſe I think them unworthy your notice, but, becauſe I really did not underſtand them: yet, there was one my heart acknowledged, who, though only

in appearance the child of poverty, seemed to have more than imaginary claims on my compassion.

The heroine of my tale was a poor old beggar, in whose appearance famine and wretchedness, of every description, were so strongly personified, that from the mere force of imagination, I could have wept over them: when she asked alms, it was not in the accents of importunity, but in the pathetic tones of graceful persuasion.

She had followed me—I had spoken to her, as if she really was what she only represented; and had she chose to accept the whole contents of my purse, they would certainly have been her own; as I *really* was fool enough to offer them with the most *serious* intentions.

This ingenuous confession of my simplicity, I hope will make my dear Grand-mama smile; and if Miss Beauly, who is so much better acquainted with the world than I am, should laugh at such a proof of credulity and simpleness, her mirth will
not

not be of that sort which I unfortunately excited in some lady-masks, who had made themselves spectators of my ridiculous wanderings.

This venerable figure did not cease to follow me, from the time I had shewn how easily I was to be made the dupe of fiction; particularly whilst Lady Jane Petworth talked to me, she was standing so very near, that I felt her press against my arm, to which situation I supposed she had been driven by the surrounding concourse. Again, when I had parted from the Duchess, and was retired to a distant room, I still found the same pity-moving object at my elbow.

I invited her to sit down by me.

You are all sweetness, all condescension! said she, taking the seat I offered her. Ah, how amiable, how worthy to be adored is Miss Montague!

I was, as you may conceive, struck with amazement. I hastily asked how she came to discover me, and whether I had the

honour of being particularly known to her, that she could so readily penetrate through a disguise which had baffled the enquiries of all other eyes but her own ?

My astonishment increased, when she replied, No, Madam, I have never seen your face ; and it was by accident I heard your name pronounced a few minutes ago, by a Lady Abbess, to whom you was speaking. I was first attracted towards you because, from your evident disinclination to join in the riotous confusion going forwards, I thought you some neglected, solitary being, like myself, *unknowning* and *unknown*.

And is it possible this can be your case, Madam ?

Nothing is more certain—there is but one person, in all this assemblage of splendor and happiness, whom I know ; and even by that *one* my presence, in this country, is unsuspected : I may therefore say, that to *him* also I am unknown.

The

The strange visitor, who came to the Duchess so privately, and made me the subject of her mysterious enquiries, rushed on my memory, and I cried have you never been in this house before?

How seldom, she cried, does the path of wretched wanderers lead through the flowery pastures of greatness!—The steps of misery are difficult to trace, and few there are who are disposed to mark them.

I beg your pardon, said I, and I confess my stupidity. This is the second time I have complimented the spirit and propriety with which you have supported your assumed character. Your poverty would have made me your benefactress, and your exquisite representation of wretchedness, would have cheated me of my tears. I admire your talents, but rejoice infinitely more, that all you have been making me suffer is only the work of fiction.

Fiction!—of fiction! repeated she, in a quick tone. Oh, blessed virgin! if my woes are not real, what is reality!

I looked

I looked up at this exclamation—her eyes were swimming in sorrow, and her bosom heaving with strong emotions!

From that moment I began to suspect the poor creature's head was disordered—You know what a coward I am; and my terror was so great, that I thought of nothing but how to get away without alarming or offending her.

Had we not better, said I, walk about and endeavour to divest ourselves of the melancholy impressions to which we are yielding with too little opposition?

I would, by no means, returned the mask, prevent Miss Montague from seeking those pleasures *she* is formed to embellish as well as to enjoy. I am totally estranged from pleasure; but though my ears are closed to all sounds of joy, whilst conversing with you I have felt that my mind is not quite insensible to some sort of relief.—Adieu, too much beloved, too charming Miss Montague!—I have no right to detain you.

This

This was not the language of insanity. I again thought of the foreign Lady. The accents and the musical tones of my companion, reminded me more strongly of the Duchess's description. I re-considered the answers she had returned to my former questions, and it now appeared rather as an evasive assent, than a decided negative.

You do not think me intitled, Madam, to the honour of your confidence, said I, taking her hand and re-placing her, for she had risen up to go from me, or you would have the goodness to tell me whether you have ever had a private interview in this house, with the mistress of it; or whether I am mistaken in the person whom I suppose you to be.

And who is it you suppose me to be?

A lovely woman, and a foreigner, one who, some weeks ago, seemed to interest herself in my fate.

Hush! my dear Miss Montague, you are too well informed, and I am covered with confusion!

But

But will you not tell me from what motive I became the subject of your enquiries ?

I fear, said she, grasping my hand, whilst her own trembled with agitation, and her voice became almost inarticulate, I fear there is a *fatal* sympathy that involves *our* destiny—if *you* are happy, I *must* be miserable—if I am *blest*, it is you who *must* be the victim of misfortune.

My God! thought I, surely the solution of this enigma must belong to Lord Auberry! And I replied, with unstudied composure, No, Madam, the fate you apprehend never can happen—our interest or our affections never can interfere.

If you would have me believe this to be possible, tell me, (in the name of Heaven do not hold me in the tortures of suspense!) was not the mask, who sat by you on the sofa,—was it not Lord——She could say no more.

Be assured, Madam, it was not Lord Auberry ; or, if it had been him, what
are

are the consequences you have to fear on my account.

All, every thing that is most dreadful—oh, you do not know the cruelty of my situation: I am the fatal, but innocent bar, that must separate him from you for ever; should he break it down, my fame, my peace, my existence, are all buried in the ruins.

What frightful images are these? Spare yourself from destructive apprehensions totally unfounded, whatever are your claims on Lord Auberry, I have no demands on him that can prevent their establishment.

I know it, I know it, she eagerly replied; your honour, your delicacy, your prudence, your compassion, are they not all the guardians of my fate? But what is there to guarantee on the part of Lord Auberry? He *may*, it is *possible* he may, be at liberty again to renew those vows he forfeited in one unfaithful, unfortunate moment. Could you reject them now? could you
you

you spurn from your feet the man, who for your sake has plunged into premeditated guilt, and in the phrenzy of passion tramples on all ties that obstruct his passage as a lover and a husband? Yes, you would, I feel you would reject him; but great God, what then will become of Auberry!

Well, dearest Grandmama, what is your opinion of this extraordinary woman? She is certainly the Wife or the Mistress of Lord Auberry.—I heard long ago he had brought a beautiful woman with him from the Continent, and that she lives here under his protection; and yet she said, (he) evidently meaning his Lordship, did not even suspect that she was in this country. Whatever may be the truth of this intricate business, I thought it a duty owing to myself, as well as to the pity I felt for her distress, to give her the most unequivocal assurances that my future prospects of felicity had no sort of reference to Lord Auberry, but depended altogether on another, who would receive my hand at
the

the altar, and invariably possess my affections.

I should have said a great deal more, and have offered her my unlimited friendship to console or advise her; but though I was prepossessed beyond all description in her favour, a certain degree of doubt hung upon my mind, which made me more guarded than I should have been, had she told me she was the wife of Lord Auberry: *then* I should have loved her; as it was, I could only pity, and even that cold sentiment was allayed by suspicion.

She penetrated to the very recesses of my thoughts, and having thanked me for the confidence I had reposed in her with that sort of dignity which none, I think, but virtuous souls are capable of feeling, she said, you have perfectly satisfied *me*, Miss Montague, but I perceive, with concern, you are not satisfied *with* me. I have been used to command—my natural disposition is haughty—sometimes imperious—judge then what must have been
my

my humiliation, not only to find *myself* a suppliant, but even to appear before you in a *doubtful* character ; think as well of me as you can, these doubts shall be removed, *but* not yet—when you know me better, I will presume to solicit a place in your friendship. I will remember your goodness every day, every hour, and your gentleness, till we meet again, shall be the mirror in which I will correct my own impetuosity.

If this wonderful creature is the mistress of Lord Auberry, where could he find sophistry strong enough to overturn the principles of a mind so great of understanding, so brilliant of dignity, so impressive? And if she be his wife, how can he wish to abandon her? Most unaccountable man ! with what joy would I congratulate him on the happiness of his fate, with what affection *embrace* the lovely Foreigner, would he but present her to me as Lady Auberry !

My

My heart is warm towards her; she *must* be innocent, she cannot be unamiable.

I readily granted the request which she made with particular energy, to let what had passed between us rest in silence. I do not wish you to forget it, said she, but it will be my ruin, should it reach the ears of my ——she paused—I verily believe she was going to say Husband; however, *my Lord* was the conclusion of her sentence, and we separated, but not till she had reassured me, that though it was possible we might never meet more, I should be informed of those events, the explanation of which might give her a better title than she had at present, to my good opinion.

Being once more left alone, I walked about from room to room and laughed immoderately under my mask, to see how poor Mr. Lexington was fatiguing himself in the wrong pursuit on which I had sent him. I saw the Duke near him, they often stood still and talked together, when
I sup-

I supposed he was complaining of his ill-success.

I watched my opportunity of following the Duke as he turned away from his disconsolate Nephew—renewing my attack on the patience of this dear friend, I made myself, if possible, more troublesome than before. I talked as fast as I could, my voice was raised, my tones peremptory, my subjects such, as I knew he was most averse to. I professed myself devoted to politics, criticised the speeches of his favourite Speakers in the House of Commons, praised those he disliked, abused Ministers, gave my sentiments with the gravity of a Senator, asked his opinion with the flippancy of an assured Woman, and the pedantry of a learned one ; then, without waiting for the information I required, I poured into his passive ears fresh volleys of mere sounds, which had neither sense or meaning. I had never seen his temper discomposed, and was determined to try
how

how long it would hold out against the fierce siege of folly, ignorance, and impertinence, with which I unceasingly annoyed him.

He let me run on a considerable time without interruption ; sometimes he would smile, and at others speak to any man who happened to pass us, with the design, as I saw, of shaking me off, but I stuck so close to his side, that it was impossible : at last, I had so far provoked him, as to draw from the reservedest mind in the world this sarcasm :—he was sorry to observe a Lady of my deep erudition had so few admirers in so large a circle, that he, who was the worst judge in the world of my perfections, should be the only man before whom I chose to display them.

It is, said I, because you are so good to give me your entire attention, and from your remarks I hope to gain much information.

The devil a remark have I made ; your own, Madam, are so incessant, that
you

you leave me no opportunity to make them.

Excuse me, my Lord, I am sure it must have been your own fault, for I am no great talker, and had you signified your intention to speak, your Grace would soon have found out that I had no higher ambition than to be the most delighted of hearers; but will you lend me your ear only for one half hour, for there is something in my Lord Stanhope's speech last Thursday, which I cannot for my life rightly understand—and I wish to know what explanation it is possible can be applied to it by wiser heads than my own—shall we sit down and try to puzzle it out? I am so happy to find you again after that cruel interruption at the beginning of the evening in the most interesting conversation that ever was—there are our old seats still vacant, pray let us take possession of them.

Any seat, or every seat in this house, Madam, you are at liberty to occupy; but

tete-a-tetes

tele-a-tetes do not agree with my constitution; and as to lending you my ear any longer, faith, I cannot do that, for it is already worn out in your service.

I was so much diverted with the victory obtained over his placidity, for now there was nothing like patience or forbearance in his clouded aspect, that I fell into a violent fit of laughing; and, dropping the bead from my lips, which had, till then, disguised my voice, he found me out in a moment.

Never was man more delighted, or woman more flattered, than we both were on this occasion. I cannot tell you the joy with which his Grace recognized me, or the approbation he bestowed on me for tormenting him.

He would have gone that moment to bring up Mr. Lexington, who, he told me, was in a state of absolute desperation; and had quarrelled with the Duchess for keeping him so long in a state of suspense; besides venting his rage on every mask un-

der which he expected to find me. I have pitied his disappointments this whole night, said the Duke; he is really miserable, and you must allow me to point out his remedy.

I would by no means consent to the discovery, unless it was made with the Duchess's permission: and his Grace left me in order to obtain it.

Whilst I sat waiting his return, I saw Mr. Lexington, as I supposed, coming the opposite way from that taken by the Duke; and as he seemed to intend passing by without noticing me, I concluded he must be extremely angry at my having deceived him. A little bustle, occasioned by a character who had collected many people round him, made my blue domino halt just as he came near the sofa on which I was sitting; the mask was a Patagonian infant, six feet high, and the most noisy brat I ever heard—so thought the blue domino—who, without deigning to throw one look towards me, sat down by my side, muttering

muttering to himself, Damn'd stuff—infernal folly!

So prepossessed was I that this could be no other than Mr. Lexington, and so ready to charge myself both with his discontent and neglect, that, in hopes to restore his good humour, I asked if he had found out Miss Montague?

He started—looked round at me—and I thought his eyes flashed lightning, as he repeated the name of Montague—Miss Montague!—have I found out Miss Montague!—to whom am I indebted for this extraordinary question?—and how have I the honour to be so well known to the enquirer, that so little ceremony is thought necessary?

He has forgot me, said I, mentally, but I will give him a remembrancer.

Whoever I am, or whoever you are, I replied, is of no signification—short memories are sometimes convenient; and, if you choose to forget that we have met before, it may be more to my advantage than

F 2

if

if you were to remember how badly I have been serving you. But, pray tell me, have you met with her?

With whom?

Why, with your favourite Miss Montague—perhaps I could have directed you better.—What in the world can you see in that uninformed country girl, to make yourself so ridiculous about her. A little bird has been whispering in my ear, that you are giving the world room to suppose you half frantic, in running after her who is determined you shall not find the *prodigious* felicity you are in pursuit of till she pleases. Will you let me give you a word of friendly advice?

He remained fullenly silent.

You do not forbid me—I will therefore, though my advice should be obtrusive, venture to tell you, that you had better drop all thoughts of Miss Montague; there are a thousand other women more deserving than she is of your attention.

Think

Think what must have been my surprise when the mask answered, in his own voice, and that voice I knew to be Lord Auberry's, *I never did pay any attentions to Miss Montague—I have shewn her the civilities due to my father's relation—if she says more, she has misinformed you.*

No, my Lord, she has never said half so much as you now say. There is not the least occasion for your assertions to clear you from all imputation on the score of Miss Montague. Believe me, I do your taste and judgment more credit, than to suspect you of any attachment in that quarter.

And yet you said otherwise, not a moment since. How am I to understand you?

It was owing to the trifling mistake of supposing, merely from the colour of your domino, that you was another person; for, till you declared yourself, I had no idea that I was speaking to Lord Auberry.

Who then did you take me for? It seemed as if you thought him greatly interested about my Cousin.

I believe he would not deny the charge. There is such a report, and I have reason to think he takes no particular pains to silence it. All men have not such high notions of propriety as your Lordship.

So, then, she is going to be married, I suppose?

Perhaps it is rather likely.

And, to whom?

That I do not think myself at liberty to tell you.

Why not?

Because no person has a right to divulge any secret that does not belong to themselves; or, even if it did, there may be quite as much wisdom in keeping as in disclosing it.

Some match of interest, I do not doubt, to which the poor girl is to be the sacrifice?

On

On the contrary, it will be an union of inclination on both sides. Miss Montague is your relation ; as such, it would be cruel to keep you in suspense for her happiness. Be assured, then, there is no sacrifice in the case ; for I know that the man who leads your Cousin to the altar must first be in actual possession of her entire and undivided affections.

You are very knowing.

Any child may know as much, who is on the same footing with Miss Montague that I am.

There is a damned deal of smuggling in this business, or I should have heard it before.

Young men are seldom consulted on these sort of affairs. I believe had your Lordship been a *married* man, the case would have been different ; she could then have had no objection in the world to your being made acquainted with her approaching change of condition.

F 4

Change

Change of condition! repeated he, bursting into a loud, ironical laugh, I wish my head may not ach till she changes her condition!

Did you ever hear such impertinence! I have hardly patience to relate it. I now every moment expected when the Duke would return, and bring Mr. Lexington with him. I made several attempts to get rid of him, but finding he would not be the first to move, I set him the example, by rising hastily and hiding myself in the multitude, where I supposed his aversion to a crowd would not permit him to follow me; but I was mistaken, and though I shifted my situation twenty times, he was still at my elbow, and as full of enquiries as ever. At last, I determined to take shelter with the Duchesse.

Have you seen the Duke and Lexington, said she? I had hardly time to say no, when, looking round, I saw Lord Auberry, who, I thought, was at the distance of two rooms from me, standing
close

close at my side, I whispered the Duchess, —for God's sake do not call me by my name!—I will tell you my reasons afterwards.

No whispering, cried Lord Auberry: treason, death, tortures, may be conveyed in a whisper!

At this moment Mr. Lexington flew towards me. How dare you, said he, seizing both my hands, encounter the fury of my rage—it has been boiling through my veins since I last sat eyes on you—Sweet is the revenge that——

Have done! cried I, interrupting him, and if you know me *now*, say not a word, I charge you!

Lord Auberry looked at him, with no good meaning; and I was glad at heart when his Lordship withdrew, which he did in much haste, and left us to converse at our ease.

I believe it is the prerogative of mankind to be impatient.—Mr. Lexington told me, he had sent off an express to River-

dale, yesterday, charged with dispatches to you, from the Duke, the Duchefs, and himfelf. He allows no more than eight and forty hours of abfence. I told him, I hoped he had fupplied his meffenger with wings; for, unlefs he flew, it was impoffible to perform the journey in twice the time his bounty had allotted.

Hâve you no fentiment of compaffion for me? faid he. I, who muft walk on thorns, and lie down on beds of nettles, till he comes back? Is all your pity beftowed on poft-horfes, and a fellow whose mind is at eafe, though his bones may be fhaken? It is like the little commiferation you have had for me the whole of this evening, and if you do not learn to behave better, I fhall tell my Grandmama Auberry of you, Mifs Montague.

I muft break off abruptly—I am forry for it—writing is like gambling, at leaft by what I can difcover fince I have been in the way of inftruction—to quit either the fubject or the game one is fond of, is
attended

attended with reluctance: there is only this difference, that one is an innocent, the other a destructive pursuit. I fear Lord Auberry plays deep—Mr. Lexington has no propensity that way—I am glad of it. The fate of poor Mrs. Beverly, in the Gamester, may be that of any other woman. Principalities are as easily lost as pounds.

Adieu, dearest Grandmama, adieu dear Miss Beauly. I could find much more to say, but a second message from those whom at present I do obey, and from him, who, hereafter, I shall have pleasure in obeying, calls me from you.

M. MONTAGUE.

F 6

LETTER

LETTTER XXXIV.

Lord Auberry to Sir Ashton Montague.

Feb, 29, 1774

I Am no longer refractory—no more sneaking scruples govern me—I send you an irrevocable *carte blanche*—fill it up as you like—and if thy own abilities are not equal to the task, call in to thy aid all the men and women devils in whom thou canst put thy trust.

Hark ye, Montague, dost thou not know that honour is the bond of fidelity—what oath then canst thou invent, binding enough to tie down the accomplices of thy infernal devices? Some form of words thou must put together, to secure the silence of thy agents, *male and female*;
they

they will else betray us—not from the horrors of conscience—neither you, or I, or they, have any thing to do with conscience—oh no, nothing in the world!—Thank God, my soul is callous, absolutely callous!—and so is *thine*, my friend!—and so *must* be theirs, who are employed to act the under parts in the merry farce we are getting up. No, no, we shall not impede one another for conscience sake!

Rage, revenge, avarice, drunkenness, folly, are the avenues through which our secret will escape, if thou dost not stop them up by some tremendous imprecation. But where, I say, is the oath that can bind together the workers of iniquity, though it were signed in blood, and sealed with their damnation!

Tell the women, I have sworn to blast the fame of their beauty!—tell the men, I have sworn to make mince-meat of *them*, to cut them into ten thousand pieces, if they *betray* their trust. No, threaten them
in

in thy own name: thou knowest I dare not.

Montague, *thou* art the ostensible director, whilst Auberry, the *dastard* Auberry, sculks behind thy bolder villany, creeping with reptile-pace, and stabbing in the dark. Yet, dare not think I have a coward soul. The fury of a lion, compared to what I feel, is gentleness, absolute softness; and, rather than see Miss Montague the wife of any man that breathes upon the earth, I would, by Heaven I would, throw off the damned *rascally* disguise with which I hide my love—forget that I was human—with savage vengeance wage war against mankind, and conquer a *host* of Lexingtons.

Last night——my head aches cursedly——my heart aches cursedly——I must dismiss my thoughts for the present—they are devilish dull companions, and I am obliged to give them a wet of brandy every touch and turn, or I should hang myself in my own garters.

One

One will not always do—the bottle stands at my elbow—I tried a first glass—I was still a puppy—a second cheered me—a third has restored me to reason—I will try a fourth, and then I may be able to go on with my story.

Lexington is going to be married to *my* Mary—I found it all out last night—You must not mind if my lines are not straight, or my sentences connected,—I believe I have over-done it now—So I did in the coffee-room, one night after I had seen her at the opera—I took four glasses then, as fast as I could bolt them—you never saw such a damned pickle as I was in after that—and I had a finer afterwards—but what does that signify?

Lexington is going to be married, but by G—he shall do no such act without my leave—no, not though that old meddling gentleman the Archbishop himself of Canterbury should grant the licence.—I found it all out last night—O my boy, you never saw such sport in your life
as

as I could have shewn you at the masquerade——I don't recollect how it happened—but there I found it all out.

Lexington, whether I say it or not, is a noble fellow, by G——; not exactly of thy own fort—he would do as much to get his friend out of a scrape as any man——*but*—mind me, Montague—he would not first get him into it——I don't say this by way of reflection——*thou* art an honest fellow *too*—in thy way——for, when the Devil employs thee, thou art sure to do his business as well as another——After this apology we are friends again, I hope.

Faith, Lexington shall marry any woman in the kingdom but my Mary—he who wins Mary, must first vanquish——'zounds, but I dare not draw my sword!——There, I say there are more ways of touching a man's heart than with *steel*——What if I am drunk—I can compose my plans, as Lord R—— did his music, as well drunk as sober——And as I am appointed

pointed only to the honourable post of discharging pop-guns in the dark, you shall find it is not for want of skill to occupy a better station——but I cannot explain all the half-formed ideas that are floating in my brain—it is as much impossible for me to collect them, at present, as to make the room stand still, which is now running round and round—with your happy friend—at the rate of three miles in a second!

——Can you tell me, Sir Ashton Montague, what is the reason that I am not going to marry your Cousin?——I am sure there is nobody in the world who can be more ready than I am to fulfil all my engagements to her —— Upon my soul I never adored any other woman than herself——and now she is a thousand times more adorable than ever!——I beg your pardon——a gleam of light breaks in on my benighted memory, to shew me there was a day—a week—a month——well, but it's off again—and I am as dark as before——I only know she cannot be
mine

mine—*yet*—and that she shall not be another's—*ever*——Montague, I am going to lay down I — can sit up no longer—I will write more to-morrow—if I can.

——I have slept half an hour, but my dreams were torture—a fit of dulness came over me—I would not have indulged it, had I foreseen the vision my fancy would have represented—I waked in terrors—rang my bell—re-dressed—and am again set down at my secretaire, to bestow on you another half hour—any company is better than my own—any employment more to my taste, than flying about on the fiery wings of dæmons and hobgoblins ——What a scene has been opened to me in this short dream—ask me not *what* it was—it is *too* terrible to relate—I shall try to forget it; or if it will force its way back, I shall have recourse to my old champion, and attack *spiritual* with *spiritual*.

A week of rest and cold water would not more effectually have rescued my senses, from the obscurity that enveloped them

them when I left you, half an hour ago, than this dream or vision has done—Fright, I have been told, has the faculty of clearing the reason, clouded by inebriety—I desire no such remedy—it is a thousand times worse than the disease—You hear me confess I have been frightened—it is the *first* time in my life—*mark that*—and by no natural means—*mark that* also—yet it was but the work of imagination—then why should it hang about my heart *now* that I am awake—We are going to embark, Montague—had we not better—stop—but *then* will she not be the wife of Lexington?—*Avaunt!* thou destructive idea—worse than all the spectres Hell can produce—Let us go on, my friend, and stop when the work is finished—there will be time enough after that for repentance.

I thought myself more steady than in reality I find to be the case—I am not well enough to revise what I have written—let it go then, and make the best of it—
—you

—you have been used to decipher my meanings, when I could hardly be said to understand them—Do you remember that fatal gift of penetration, which made you discover what I did not myself suspect?—No, no—I never was in love with any body but Miss Montague—but you persuaded me—and you have undone me!

—————This will never do—I am a cup too low yet—so here it goes—again—again—and now it will do.

What think you happened to me last night?—I saw her, I told her I never had loved her—but her angel-face was concealed under the mask of—a devil, I believe—I do not exactly recollect—she had the advantage of me—she knew me, but I knew not her—oh, it was a cursed take-in!—but what matters it?—perhaps it is for the best.——What I have told her with my tongue, is as strong a proof that she is now nothing to me, as if I had given her the most *insulting* assurances of this

this damned lie in my own hand-writing and under my own signature—which I think—if I am capable of thinking at all—was the plan chalked out for the poor idiot Auberry to proceed by——Well, if it was not that, it was something like it.

My mother, my sister, my friend, my *lawyers*—I hope I have pleased you all *now*—now that I am the tame tractable fool you would have me to be—*now* that I make no resistance, but sit down contented—to be fed—dangled—and tutored, like a babe—or fetch and carry like a spaniel?——Will not this tell well in the archives of my family?——Will not the sixteenth Earl of Auberry make a most respectable figure in history?

———She has told me that she actually marries Lexington from choice—from inclination——I could have forgiven her for taking him on *any* other motive——but curse me, if I forgive her for this!——that she should love *me* is impossible—I think I should despise *her* if she did——
but

but what business has she to love Lexington?—Besides, I looked forward, you know—there again, I fear you have cheated me——*it will all be well—it will come round*——I am miserably cut——yet I have a bright thought, if concerning this doing well, and this coming about——I will try and give it vent——'tis like an apple——No——damn it—that will not do——I mean 'tis like an orchard, full of apple-trees, all in blossom, where you leave me in a famishing condition, and tell me, if I will stand still with my jaws open till the fruit ripens, it will then drop into my mouth!——This is the first word of sense I have written, and it shall be the last of nonsense.——I am any thing—or any body you please——but I believe my name is

AUBERRY.

LETTER

LETTER XXXV.

Miss Beaully to Lady Jane Petworth.

Feb. 9th, 17—

IT is only two days since I wrote to you, my dear aunt, but can I let the express, who arrived here an hour ago from the Duke of Cleveland, return back without one sheet, at least, of short acknowledgements to you?—Impossible!

What a charming prophetess you are, and how all your prophecies have been verified! can you foresee no such husband as Mr. Lexington in store for your Anna?—I guess what your answer will be—I do not know another such, child—I believe you, dear aunt, and must be content till some hero of a second rate falls in your way,

way, when, perhaps you will begin to think of my preferment.

Joy is a perfect camelion, it changes its complexion just as it happens to shew itself on different occasions, and on different subjects ; in me, it appears like madness—in Lady Auberry, it is composure personified—it revels in my features—it draws tears from her eyes, and yet how much stronger must her transports be, who lives but in the felicity of her granddaughter, to any inferior sentiment of admiration or friendship, that in the utmost sincerity of my heart I am able to imbibe for Miss Moutague—I think I love her almost as well as I should have loved a sister ; yet it is not in nature that I should love her as Lady Auberry loves her.

If I was less happy, I might be more intelligible. Lady Auberry is preparing her dispatches, and I am sitting by her side—I can hardly take my eyes from her placid benign countenance—how then can I know what I am about : never sure, at the age
of

of seventy-eight, was there a face so animated—so beautiful as Lady Auberry's : had she lived and died in Rome, her virtues would have sainted her, and painters incircled her head with the glory by which saints are distinguished—had she been born amongst savages, she would have been worshipped as the dispenser of those attributes which are every where held sacred. Our's is not a country of idolatry ; if it was, all men in the days of her youth must have knelt at her shrine. But, whether her own sex, in youth or in age, would have acknowledged her supremacy is a matter of doubt. I saw enough to convince me, in the short time I was in town with Miss Montague, that however the *last* generation of females might have been disposed towards Lady Auberry, the *present* race of *fine* ladies are not inclined to pay any particular homage to her descendant.

It was very fortunate that I happened to meet the Duke's express in my walk, before

he reached the house, otherwise the alarm might have been premature. Sudden surprisals are not the best restoratives for declining nature; and Lady Auberry, from the window at which she was sitting, with the sash thrown up, to enjoy the freshness of the finest morning I ever saw at this early dawn of spring, must have seen the impatient messenger of an impatient master (I do not mean his Grace, but Mr. Lexington), not galloping, but absolutely flying up the avenue. He slackened his pace when he saw me. I recollected, in a moment, the Duke's livery—feared some dreadful tidings—my heart failed me—and I beckoned him to stop.

All my terrors vanished at the answer I received to my first, very eagerly asked, question—Is Miss Montague well?

I next directed the servant to go by a back way to the house, and I carried his dispatches myself to Lady Auberry.

You return too soon, my dear, said her Ladyship, the moment I made my appearance;

pearance ; I did not expect you this hour ; I am sure you have not brought me your usual offering of sweet violets, whose precious roots were planted by the hands of my sweeter Mary.

I am no truant—I have not neglected the delightful task you assigned me, I have only postponed it (I replied) to bring you, I hope, a better present than Miss Montague's violets; for, in my way to the bank where they flourish, I picked up intelligence of Miss Montague herself.

How can that be? asked she; for we shall not get our letters till evening.

Not indeed if they were to arrive by the common mode of conveyance, returned I, but I have got them by other means, and here they are (I had hid the packet under my cloak, which I now delivered into her hands); but before your Ladyship breaks the seal, for the whole contents were inclosed in one wrapper, I can assure you our dear Mary is in perfect good health.— I suppose she is going to be married, and

G 2

writes

writes for your approbation. This I said by guess, for then I did not know a word of the matter.

Though I gave it a light turn, the arrival of a packet so unexpected, seemed to alarm and rather agitate Lady Atterbury, for her hand trembled as the wax divided; and having examined the superscription of three letters inclosed in the first cover, she cried out, there is not a syllable of Mary's writing on any of them!

I was a good deal surpris'd myself, at this extraordinary circumstance; but, renewing my assurances that she was nevertheless as well as well could be, she proceeded with more courage to examine the contents, and the first she opened was from Mr. Lexington.

Read it, Miss Beauly, said she, I cannot.—It is a shame to encourage these sort of emotions at my age, which are still so strong as to affect my little remnant of perception. If it had been written by Mary, I could have read it, perhaps with-
out

out glasses—it must be *about* Mary—and, with the aid of glasses, I cannot distinguish one letter from another.

Mr. Lexington's was such an epistle as must make the fair subject of it not only happy, but vain; and if there is such an ingredient as vanity in the composition of Miss Montague, it can no longer lie dormant; it must be roused at knowing that she possesses the entire affections of the most handsome, graceful, accomplished, and amiable man in the whole circle of fashion.

Our delighted Grandmama did not exactly express her joy in my language—her's wanted rapidity, glowing rapidity—it wanted colouring—it wanted the flowery eloquence of nonsense—in short, it wanted every thing but energy—unrestrained happiness unalloyed—and piety unexampled.

You know, my dear, kind Aunt, I always loved the Duke of Cleveland, and that I was very much afraid of (which is equal to saying), I did not love his Duchess;

but I am determined never more to dislike her as long as I live, if I can help it, and I will also try to help it; for if ever I again happen to see her in her *disagreeables*, as no doubt I shall, I will think of her very polite letter to Lady Aubertry, her warm expressions of affection for Miss Montague, the *predilection* she declares for an union between her and Mr. Lexington; then, should I not be able to place another good action to her account, this is so charming a *trait*, that it shall stand in the place of universal charity in my estimation; and if it does not cover *all* her transgressions against humility, it shall be an atonement for *many* of them.

The Duke, of course, conveys his sentiments and proposals as any good man would do, who is seeking the honour and felicity of his family, where he is sure his hopes will not be disappointed. I am to see Lady Aubertry's answer to these dear letters, as soon as she has finished them. There will be no occasion for my giving a repetition

repetition of their contents, you will readily find them in the knowledge you possess of her heart and understanding. The Duke's offers of settlement are very noble ; there is no fear that she will be left behind, either in the road of candour, affection, or generosity.

How I long for the dear Mary's next journal ! Not so much for her account of the masquerade you had last night, but to hear from herself every thing about this delightful conquest !

I said, just now, to Lady Auberry, that I hoped Miss Montague would like Mr. Lexington ; and this was her answer, ushered in with that sort of sweet, satisfied, joyful smile, which belongs, in a peculiar manner, to the subject of her Granddaughter—

Certainty, my dear, precludes *hope* ; that she has permitted these letters to be sent to me, amounts to a demonstration of her sentiments.—A prince should not be the husband of my Mary, but by her *own* election.—

tion.—Beloved Mary! she added, lifting up her eyes and clasped hands to Heaven, as if to call down blessings from thence on the child of her dotage, Mayest thou find in Lexington a recompence for the treachery of Auberry!

Lady Auberry has just turned round, to bid me remind you that she has not received a line from you this fortnight. She orders me also to say, that if she does not hear in a day or two, at the farthest, she is determined to vent all her spleen and ill-humour on her Grand-daughter and Mr. Lexington, who she is sure are amenable to punishment, as being the ostensible causes of your silence.

I asked her Ladyship how much longer it would be before she should have finished her dispatches, and find I can go down another page or two on a fresh sheet of paper, without fear of detaining the Duke's servant beyond her Ladyship's leisure, who means to send a short letter to Miss Montague,

tague, as well as to answer those she has received this morning.

At a little distance from hence lives Dame Estrige, who nursed Miss Montague from the time that fatal accident happened, which deprived the dear infant of its amiable mother, till the death of Lord Auberry, her grandfather.

This good Dame Estrige has been our constant visitor, at least three times a week, since I came to Riversdale. She is distractedly fond of her young Lady, and, what I think most extremely unnatural, she is much more interested about every thing that concerns her than for the welfare of her own daughter, the little, simple, modest Jenny, who is the present attendant on her beloved nursing.

Lady Auberry says, this sort of preference for nurse-children, however unnatural, is the most common thing in the world. She is a great favourite—always most kindly received—and never goes home with an empty purse.

G 5

I would

I would not, my dear Aunt, wish you to tell either Miss Montague or Jenny my opinion, because it will only give them trouble. But I believe this poor old nurse will not be very long the inhabitant of her neat cottage, or any other earthly dwelling.

Lady Auberry does not see the change in her that I do. She came here yesterday, but it was in consequence of a kind message from her Ladyship, who, fearing she was ill, because we had not seen her for five days, sent a carriage to make the conveyance easy to her, if she should be unwell; but, when she did come, some other excuse was made, besides sickness, for her long absence. And yet, in my life, I never saw such an alteration as had taken place since I last saw her. It was only visible to me; for, though she looks more like a ghost than a living creature, as long as there was no change in the subject, with which she never fails to entertain her benefactress, as long as she was asking questions

tions about, lavishing praises and calling down blessings, on Miss Montague, Lady Auberry was too much delighted to perceive any change in the good woman herself, and yet she certainly looks ten years older than she did five days ago.

I could not but remark, that as often as she talked of Miss Montague, her name was followed by tears, or preceded by sighs, though she took great pains to hide them from the observation of Lady Auberry. It is impossible, by her whole appearance, I think, that she can live long; and the fear that she should never more see her beloved foster-child, was what perhaps occasioned her to speak her name, and to hear it spoken, with such marked affection. I am, from this one instance, rather inclined to believe, with Lady Auberry, that what seems unnatural may not be uncommon.

When I tried to turn her thoughts, as well as to direct them, and talked to her of her daughter Jenny, she was perfectly

G 6

indifferent

indifferent to all the praises I bestowed on her, and only replied, she thanked my Ladyship for all my kindness, but as for Jenny, she was not troubled about her.

Lady Auberry has this moment finished, and I have only to say, what I have said a thousand times before, and what I hope my actions have expressed as often, that I am, my dearest Aunt, your grateful and dutiful Niece,

A. BEAULY.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVI.

Sir Aſhton Montague to Lord Auberry.

March 7, 17—

I Date from no place, becauſe I have no particular reſidence, but, like all mortal men, am here to-day and gone to-morrow; however, your Lordſhip's moſt temperate or intemperate letter of abuſe, had the good fortune to overtake me at Bath, where I was making a flying call on your amiable mother and ſiſter, who have more underſtanding in matters of *buſineſs* than their whole ſex put together.

I could hardly gulp down ſome of your expreſſions, my Lord, the devil take me if I could. Drunk or ſober you ſhould know your friends, and keep them. You
have

have not lost me yet—but, take more care in future, or by G—— you may chance to lose my friendship and your own life into the bargain.

Now, do not imagine that I want to quarrel with thee, Auberry—I have no such intention—but, to hold on good terms, it is right, as you tell me your mind without *ceremony*, that I should follow your *very* excellent example——*so* now let us shake hands; for, by this *arrangement*, we must be blockheads not to understand one another. *Silence* is the word—*eternal* silence.—Whoever but whispers to *betray*, must case his perfidious soul in iron, or *thy* sword, or *my* sword, shall search it out, and send it to the *master* devil, of whom thou so *humorously* callest me a faithful and diligent servant.

There is nothing in the world more effectual than plain dealing, to the preservation of confidence; there could be no links in the chain of society without it, particularly amongst *our class*; such exploits

plans as we achieve are only supported by *plain* dealing and *unshaken* confidence: without them, all our well-built projects must go to the ground, because neither *Auberry* or *Montague* can perform them by the prowess of his own single arm.

I did not trust the whole contents of your last *friendly* epistle with Mrs. or Miss Pledell; there is no occasion for their knowing that *Miss Montague* is at the bottom of your motive for consenting to a plan which *they* think sufficiently connected to your *own* immediate interest, to gain a complete victory over your former scruples.

I merely told them, that you was come to your senses; that you had sent me a *carte blanche*, which, with their assistance, I would fill up—yes, my boy, we will fill it up—with hieroglyphics, not to be understood by any body but the parties who are alone intitled to decypher the mystical characters. And I have to assure you, that since I discovered to them a bend in the iron stubbornness of thy constitutional disposition,

disposition, no mother or sister can be prouder of a son and a brother than these ladies are of the condescending Lord Auberry, who, in fact, is merely condescending to promote his *own* happiness, by the *only* possible means it can *ever* be secured to him.

Let us but guard the Hesperian fruit till thou art *free* to gather it, then bid defiance to all obstacles ; for, if she will not be *thy* wife when she *may*, she shall, by Heaven, when thou pleasest to make her such ! for whilst there are horses and rascals in the nation, we shall not want means to carry her off in triumph !

Much has already been *done*—much more remains to be done, before this last, best end, can be accomplished. But you know the *conditions* on which I have consented to serve you with my wits, my fortune, and my sword ; the latter I only mean to use if any meddling puppy should call thee out before thy shackles are taken off, which, at present, restrain thee from
making

making a bold, ostensible appearance in thy own cause.

One shall our *motives*, one our *interests* be;
Thy Friend shall *fight* the man who threatens thee.

The conditions—you *know* the conditions—but as I have sometimes found that when the work is *half* finished, the memory begins to *fail*, I have made certain memorandums, which, before I go a step further in the business, must be formally executed; for which purpose, I shall call upon you at my first leisure.

This job once done, I shall next examine the snares I have been laying since I saw you last, not to catch game, but to entrap idiots, and have reason to think I may find even more than I shall want for actual service; however, it is better to be too full than too scarce of hands; for where one universal opinion *has* been established, and *must* be destroyed, agents, *active* agents, will be necessary in almost every corner

corner of the habitable globe, to undo the authenticity of old conceits. Many are the *dirty* palms that must be tickled on this business—but *thy* estate is clear—so is *mine*; and if we give them a *critical* dip under water, it will not weaken their constitutional strength in the end.

The higher powers I know are ready to serve us, without *fee* or *reward*—I will answer for *all* the women, and *some* of the men. The latter are but a comparative *few* to the former. I blush to tell thee, I do not think there are more than a dozen, out of all the men I know (hirelings excepted), from whom I would ask, much *less* expect assistance.

By the term of *hirelings*, I do not merely include slaves and servants, *but* led captains and needy gentlemen, to whom the compliment of a brace of thousands may be as acceptable as a civil speech to an old forsaken coquette. We only give these *gentlemen* higher wages than servants,
and

and the former are ready to perform all the honourable offices of the latter.

I will tell you, Auberry, for your consolation, that though in point of numbers we shall find ourselves in a miserable minority, when we count *our* side of the question and reckon on *independent* members; *yet* we have names amongst them that will not disgrace *thy* rank or *my* talents. I have, on my list, noble lords and noble commoners to bring forward, when it is necessary to produce them; great soldiers and great lawyers: amongst the latter, there is one of the fraternity who will *write* for us, if we choose to employ him; and, faith, he is up to *any* subject. Yet I shall vote not to commit ourselves to *public* investigation; but as far as a squib *can* go on any little *bande-pate* without a name, I shall have no objection to add something more to his *private* fame as an author.

Leave all these matters to *my* management—*your* part lies in another cast—*you* must not be suspected to have *any* hand in the

the affair. Remember the words of your *counsel*, that nothing *like* collusion must appear, or you would lose your cause, which, by my last letters from Milan, is in a fair way.

I do not think it unlucky, that chance gave you fair play to declare off *with* Miss Montague *to* Miss Montague herself—Upon my soul, it was more honourable, than if you had done it by letter. However, what in fact, are such trifling circumstances as those, one way or the other, when matters come to be cleared up between you?—what square will it break?—will it make any difference in her present sentiments for thee, Auberry?—no, no—take my word for it, women are glad enough to get husbands at any rate; and, I suppose, our pretty cousin is not so much unlike all the rest of her sex, as to push away the blessing, when it is in her power to grasp it.

Lexington's pretensions are a mere *bagatelle*, and her *penchant* for him all my eye!

eye! Were these the only difficulties we had to cope with, our wits would have to contend only with shadows.

The world *believes* Miss Montague is in love with Lord Auberry—I have taken care to send the report about, and in no *questionable* shape. It is still *more* necessary that Lord Auberry's *indifference* for Miss Montague should, in the eyes of the world, be *also* established. To settle *that*, is your concern, and you have made a good beginning; apply to your friendly bottle as much as you please—but keep up your courage—keep up your manly resolution—we are gone too far—we are between two fires—a retreat is impossible—and the least wavering, now, would send us all to perdition.

Let me reason with you a moment before I dismiss the subject; let me try, by the soundness of argument, to prevent any returns of these yawning, agueish qualms, that made you so long hang shivering and aloof from the only means in the world
that

that could have been pointed out to you by the finger of fate as the salvation of those hopes *once* forfeited, and only by this *one* way redeemable.

Yes; you are damnably cased up, and I know it was a cursed unlucky blot; but it was yourself who cast the dice—it was not I that threw them—had you been contented with the hit, it was your own; but you threw up the game when it was in your hands, and would not sit down contented with your fair fortune, because you recollected having began a game of the same sort with a party you liked better, though from that party you had been a deserter almost at the beginning of the set.

This is the substance of my brief; and to you, who comprehend my cant phrases, the few reasonable strictures with which I shall follow it up, will shew (if you have not seen it before) the absolute necessity there has been for every thing we *have* done or *mean* to do; that is to say, if you
are

are *resolved* to carry your point at *all* events, which I presume to be your present intentions; otherwise you should have resigned your pursuit in time. Affairs might, some time ago, have been accommodated with little trouble; but, *as it is*, I once more repeat, such steps are already taken to serve you, in your own way too, as never *shall* be retracted from as long as I have warm blood in my veins, or vital heat in my body.

If I ever begged pardon of *any* man, I would ask it of you, Auberry, for the peremptory tone of decision in which I concluded the *last* sentence. It was not that I have any suspicion of your *firmness*, neither have I any more doubts of your honour than I have of my own; but, can I make you understand *too* plainly how invincibly I am *determined* to see out this troublesome business, which, in the conclusion, will not fail of insuring felicity to my friend—that tender, delicate felicity, before which every other species of happiness

ness is done away, or offers itself in vain to his acceptance.

This observation calls me to order, and brings me back to the point from which I set out in the last page, namely, to a short moment's consolatory reasoning.

Miss Montague is the *absolute* mistress of *your* fate—you would sacrifice a thousand lives to be the *master* of her's—Good—*You* are *bound*—*she* is free—you dare not speak—you dare not look.—*Others* can speak—*others* can look; and some lucky dog, who speaks and looks better than all the rest, by-and-by darts down like a hawk on your quarry, and flies off with the prize.

This would be sport to *you* with a vengeance !

Lexington is the man you fear at present; and as it is probable that he is not yet very far advanced in that head-strong passion, to which you have yielded yourself up soul and body, he might, from a very extraordinary fund of humanity, together with as capital a stock of generosity, he

he might, I say, have withdrawn his addresses from Miss Montague, and carried them to some other lady, could you but have moved his passions by any tale that has a claim to commiseration; that your own, perhaps, would have done the thing was certainly possible.

Well, then, we will suppose Lexington has raised the siege, and you are left master of the field; and what does this conquest amount to? why, the getting rid of *one* rival, when perhaps there are a hundred ready to step in and fill his deserted post.—You cannot flatter your hopes that Miss Montague, in her present situation, will be without pretenders to her favour; it would be absolutely madness to form such expectations.—And where are *you* then, my friend? exactly where you were before, with *this* difference, that every lover is not a Lexington, ready to sacrifice something of his *own* better views to the *distant* prospects of another.

VOL. III.

H

You

You see, my Lord, I have given the argument fair play ; that I have even stated as a fact what, in the very first instance, must remain doubtful, I mean that Lexington, after being received as a lover, would ever have resigned Miss Montague to you, though you had begged it of him on your knees ; and I have also shewn you what must have still been the consequences, how fatal to your predetermined plan of possession, had the fact been really and truly established ?

Pause here Auberry—Consider *your* situation—consider Miss Montague—*her* charms—*her* accomplishments—*her* connections—*her* fortune—and when you have done so, I expect this honest acknowledgment, without any more of your damned squinting reflections, that you are indebted to my plans for the accomplishment of your wishes, at least as far as the keeping Miss Montague single can be said to accomplish them ; and that there is not another

another scheme in the fertile brain of man or woman that could have been attended with certain success, but that laid down with so much circumspection, and to be executed with so much firmness, by my dear Lord, your most determined friend, and most faithful humble servant,

ASHTON MONTAGUE.

P. S. I shall probably see you next week.

LETTTER XXXVII.

*Jenny Estrige to Dame Estrige.**March 9, 17—*

DEAR MOTHER,

WITH my duty to good Lady Auberry, who I have never seen nothing like since I came to London; with my blessing to you, love to brothers, and compliments to all friends, I take up my pen, hoping you are in good health as I am at the present writing.—This is to let you know, dear Mother, that my dear, sweet, kind, beautiful young lady, as you shall hear, is a going to be married to a Squire, almost as big as a Lord, who will be a Lord too one of these days, all the ladies and gentlemen in the steward's room say so.

Besides

Besides being a Lord, the Squire takes after his uncle, the Lord Duke, by reason he is his next kinsman, and so he will be a Lord and a Duke both ; but if he was as great as his Majesty, and as rich as a Jew, I should not never think he was worthy to wipe the shoes of my lady, because why ; a little love goes further than a great deal of gold ; and if so be he was not very loving, and desperate fond, as well as rich and great, I am sure I should cry my eyes out, that she should be married to any such a sort of a man.

But, dear Mother, I have not got nothing at all to say in disparagement of Squire Lexington, by reason he is a tall, portly, handsome gentleman, as ever I sa my eyes upon ; and, by what I can find out, there is no want of love on no side at all.

The waiting gentlemen say to me, when I go down to dinner or supper, and they have been tending up stairs upon the quality—Why, Mrs. Jenny, says they, our

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young

young master that will be, and your pretty young mistress that is, will be the finest couple that have been seen for many a day; and then they shake me by the hand, which in a civil way I let them do, and they call me fellow servant, and says as how 'Squire Lexington never minds no other lady but mine; and looks at her as if he could eat her, or as though there was no viſuals at table worth looking at but herself; and my dear, dear young lady is so chearful and so happy, Mother, it would do your heart good to see how she never don't sigh and bewail herself now as she did at first to go back again to Riverdale; and she says to me, Jenny says she, be a good girl, I am going to be happy, very happy myself, and so shall you, and so shall my good old nurse—you shall both live with me, and I will give you a portion when you meet with an honest man, willing to be your husband, and I will set up your brothers in business.

You

You never did hear nothing like this, Mother, no, I am sure you never did not; but you know very well what sort of a lady mine is, and so you will know I tell you no lie, and I darest to say she will be as good as her word every day in the week.

Was there ever another such well-blooded lady born into the world? Do you mind, Mother, how you used to tell me, that when Lady Auberry came to fetch her away to the great house, after my Lord was dead and buried, how the dear little soul clung about your neck, and said she would have no mammy, but mammy Estrige; and how she cried and roared, and sobbed like any thing, because my good Lady would take her away; and how she stamped her pretty little feet with her fine red shoes on, which Mrs. Martin had brought the day before, with the lace cap and white frock, to dress her up like a lady, by the time her Grandmama came in the coach to fetch her. And so, as I was saying, and as you have told me a hundred

and a hundred times, she sat up her pipes, because she could not have Sarah, and Rachael, and I, and Aminadab, and Timothy, and Samuel, go along with her—pretty creature!

Well, she is, for all the world, just the same now as she was then—she never don't forget nobody; and though she is here a perfect goddess, as one may say, and nobody is thought nothing about but her, yet she is as kind and as humble, I warrant, as if she had still been your poor little Mary Wilson, as she was called before her Ladyship turned out to be her own grandmama.

She looks like any queen, I must say, when she is dressed and goes down to dinner—but, for all that, there is no more pride in her than there is in my Lady Auberry her own self; and all the servants were ready to worship her, for she speaks so kind and so civil to them, that they says there is not no such another born lady in the land of the living. Aye, says they, there

there is no such another as Miss Montague that darkens our doors, all the rest of them are a parcel of old *Harrysdams*, or young jilts, or *mumping* gentlewomen. I understand the meaning of all these words except old *Harrysdams*; I do suppose it is something wicked enough, but I don't never ask what they means by *Harrysdams*; but you know, Mother, it is common amongst us to call the black gentleman Old Harry, and dam stands in place of mother, so putting them together, I do believe that *Harrysdam* is nothing more or less than to say they are the devil's own mother.

If any country person, such as the like of me, had this sort of language in their mouths against their betters, they might as well eat their fingers; but here it is the fashion, and every one will speak his mind, and care no more for their betters than for their worfers.

I don't think, Mother, I shall choose to marry a great man, because I does not

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much

much admire their manners, and shall never think God's blessing will light where there is playing on the cards of a Sunday ; and yet I don't pretend for to say that I never should have liked a great man well enough to have been asked with him at church, if it had not been for these sort of things, because Mr. Rogers, the butler, is very well to be liked I must needs say, and he wears the very richest of silk waist-coats, standing an end with gold and silver, all, as he tells me, worked by the nuns, with ruffles over the tops of his fingers, of lace that the Lord Duke himself might wear for the fineness of them ; so that I can't but say, in no other shape, one should turn up one's nose at him. There is my Lady the Duchefs's woman, and the housekeeper, and two or three more of the bettermost servants, that look as if they could tear my eyes out whenever Mr. Rogers is a little civil to me, which is every time I happen to come in his way ; but they need not vex themselves, for I
never

never will marry, as I tell him ten times a day, to no man of morals, according as my good young lady advises me not for to do.

You will soon see how you like Mr. Roggers, dear Mother, for when my lady is married to the Squire, my Lord the Duke, and my Lady the Duchess, and all of us, are coming to Riversdale. Oh, dear! how I do wish it was over! and then if you think his morals can be mended—why he is very fightly to look upon, and, as we say in the country, to be sure I may be worse offered before I am twice married, for to my thinking, though he is a little heathenish, he is no worse than his betters, nor half so bad: it is a shame upon them to set such examples. I can't but say that I never did not see any thing unhandsome in Mr. Roggers; he looks like a sober man in his business; and never offered to be free or uncivil to me, ever since I come to London; but he is very kind to me for all that, and got me into a

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fnug

snug corner the other night, behind a tea-table, where I should see better by half than any of the other ladies who he employed to make tea as well as me, but I was put into the best room of all.

I can't describe to you, dear Mother, what sort of a meeting his was; but my young Lady called it a masquerade, and so did Mr. Rogers; and, call it what you will, it is for all the world the very same thing as a maiming match with us at Christmas, only that when our neighbours used to dress themselves up like fools, and go to the great house first, acting the plays, and after that to the best of the parish, they only went in a score or the matter of that; but, at our masquerade, there were hundreds on hundreds, and thousands on thousands. These sports are all made, in the country, by poor folks; but here, it was all done by gentlesfolk.

I can't say no more, at present, of this merry-making, because my lady's footman has just knocked at the door, to tell me
that

that my Lady Down's servant is waiting for a cap, Lady Bell Langton's for a hat, and Lady Arraminta Boice's for a handkerchief. And thus it is that my Lady's things are travelling about in band-boxes all over the town, and all day long. Poor dear creature, she is so good-natured that she is always as ready to lend as other folks are to borrow. I do believe if she was to wear a dish-clout on her head, all the fine ladies would send for it to cut out the pattern. But, Mother, when they have got it cut out bit by bit, and put together stick by stick, they never, none of them, will look no more like my Lady than I should look like the Queen of England, if I had one of her Majesty's cast crowns put upon my head.

I can't help telling you, dear Mother, that every thing now is called after my lady—Mrs. Rose, while my lady the Duchess's milliner came here to-day with all sorts of finery, fans, tippetts, hats, caps, feathers, neck-laces, and ear-rings, every one of which

which was a *Montague*! Now, though I don't think it no sin to be proud of this grand compliment, seeing it paid to *my* lady and not to *me*, yet I think it a sin and a shame to call things that arnt christians by christian names!

Good gracious me! I had forgot myself, and here comes another messenger; so, dear Mother, no more at the present writing from your loving and dutiful daughter, till death,

JENNY ESTRICE.

IT

IT is with confusion of face that I, the Editor, am so often intruding on the merciful dispositions of my indulgent Readers with some apology or other, either telling them a Canterbury-tale of my misfortunes, or a cock and bull story of my negligence; but what are the consequences of the former compared to the latter? I lost half a score letters; it was only a small part of my delightful manuscript, yet I lamented them sorely; but what has happened since, is a thousand times more vexatious.—Instead of a part mislaid or stolen, the whole choice collection is now locked up—the key lost,—no smith at hand to make another key—no hammer in the house to force the lock open—myself without hope—and my readers without patience!

To complete the scene of my distress, here has been my Printer's devil, who devours faster than I can write, with a demand for twenty sheets of copy before to-morrow

morrow night. I told him the accident—he grumbled with a hoarse, deep tone, Master stands still—the work, he says, will not come out till Parliament rises, and the town is empty.

Take these sheets, said I, go thy ways, call again for more at thy leisure; and as far down as Mrs. Jenny Estrige's letter to her mother, I humbly gave to the devil.

He muttered something about *past* employment in *great* families, and present business in public affairs, and said he did not know when he should find leisure to come again.

As soon as the devil was gone about *other* folks' business, for I had none to detain him, I sat down and ruminated on these mystic expressions—

Parliament will be risen, and the town empty.

And this will be the destruction of my book, cried I—more copy *must* be had at any rate. I fell to researching again for the key—tried to borrow a hammer of my neighbour—

neighbour—sent once more for the smith—but neither key, hammer, or smith, was within the reach of my good luck.

It is only, said I, to tell my dear sympathizing Readers of this *new* misfortune, they who are always ready to help a lame dog over the stile, will be contented with a narrative instead of letters, till a hammer or a smith can be procured; and I here promise that one or the other, if there be such a thing as hammer, or smith above ground, shall be forth coming, to open this unlucky *patent* lock to-morrow, next day, or the day after at the very farthest.

Without any more preamble, I begin my narrative.—

Mrs. Jenny Estrige's letter is not a composition from which it is easy to cull bright thoughts and musical sounds to enrich our language; her style is not such as would add to the fame of very wise men or very wise women, when they shoot flying to knock down applause. I know Burke would not adopt it, and a Siddons might refuse

refuse to give it the grace and pathos of a happy delivery. Nature, and nature only, who is an old school-dame, had instructed Jenny in lessons of erudition, and was so well satisfied with the performance of her pupil, that feeling something like envy to see herself equalled; if not out-done, in descriptive talents, she dashed out the name of Jenny Esdrige, added her own to the piece, and signed it *Simple Nature*.

I shall call the meek, ungrammared attendant on Miss Montague the *least* polished, and Miss Montague herself the *most* polished child of that parent who ought to be the common mother of us all, though the family of Art, were their numbers to be counted, are much more considerable than the progeny of Nature.

It is impossible for any of her children to be more artless, tender, or honest, than Jenny; more natural, susceptible, or correct, than Jenny's lovely mistress. One is the gem which ignorance encrusteth; the other has acquired brilliancy by the chissel

chisel of education; yet are they both equally amenable to the mode and manner of nature, and will not put on a ribbon or a cap that threatens to distort in them; by reflection, the features of their progenitor.

Jenay speaks only the truth, when she tells her mother that every thing under the cover of a hand-box must bear the name of Montague. Let it be considered, dear Reader, that Miss Montague was at this very time not only the favourite of all men, but soon to be married to the favourite of all women; and it will not appear so *very* strange that whatever cap or ribbon *she* put on should become the rage of fashion, even amongst the high bred, high fed, and higher taught, daughters of *ton*.

If there be any such place as paradise below the skies, I should expect to find it situated in the bosom of Miss Montague; *there* flourishes the tree of knowledge, guarded by humility; *there* bloom in original strength, unblasted by the breath of sin,

fin, vigorous and eternal, the roses of modesty, the white, unsullied lilies of pure imaginations; *there* honesty fills up every corner, and heart's-ease wantons in luxurious profusion; *there* broad rivers of charity occupy the space of waters; *there* milk of human kindness flows from a thousand springs and hidden sources; *there* all is chearful, unclouded day; *there* the passions will not contend for mastery with the rational being who is appointed to reign over them; and *there* royal conscience walks his hourly rounds, tunes up his heaven-strung harp, and warbles all is well!

Nothing could be more extravagant than the joy of Mr. Lexington, or more complete than the satisfaction of the Duke and Duchess of Cleveland, when the messenger returned from Riverdale, on the third day of his absence from town, with such letters from Lady Auberry as were calculated not to depress but to exhilarate the happiness and harmony of the expecting parties.

Each

Each person was, for a moment, employed in examining the contents of the particular dispatches addressed to themselves; Mary's letter was glanced over in an instant—it consisted only of these few lines——

“All the affection that my dearest child
“can bestow on the tenderest of lovers,
“shall be placed to the account of those
“blessings which enriches the days of her
“happy, thrice happy grandmother!”

Short as was this tender injunction, her eye had hardly glanced over it, or the paper received that pressure from her lips which was always given to every thing that came from Lady Auberry, before she saw at her side *that* lover who was the subject of her ladyship's recommendation. What he said, it is not necessary that I should repeat. All men are ardent, and Lexington is the most ardent of all men!

With a smile, that shewed the act of obedience she was going to perform was not a forced one, she gave him her hand—

I am

I am commanded, said she (her face suffused with blushes), to make you *this* present—if you ever repent accepting it, you must quarrel with Lady Auberry—remember it is not my fault.

And is Lady Auberry generous by halves only? or do you mean to keep the best part of her gift to yourself? I know very well, from what she has the goodness to say to me, that you are commanded to give me your *heart* as well as your *hand*; and I insist on being put into the quiet possession of it, from this dear and fortunate moment!

What you ask, said she, will not be worth your acceptance, till you learn to estimate its value better than you have done—the demand implies a doubt. That heart and that hand which do not go together belongs not to me: when I gave you the one I made no reserve of the other.

The Duke and Duchess, who had now also gone through their epistles, joined them before the transported Lexington could

could express, by words, the passionate emotions of his soul. I will have nothing to do with them—it is as easy to make a rope of sand as to follow the current of a lover's raptures; for when they cannot force a passage through the lips, they will fly to the eyes, and there proclaim themselves, in spite of all the restraints that forms and punctilio can lay them under.

The sweet and ingenuous frankness with which she received the compliments of her two noble friends, the returns of gratitude she made them, and the unreserve with which she spoke of her own good fortune, endeared her more than ever to their hearts, and their caresses were redoubled.

It is an absolute fact that the Duchess did, as she pressed the cheek of her beautiful ward, drop a tear upon it, which it is more than probable was the first offering her eyes had ever made to the powers of sensibility.

Such is the magnet of loveliness, united to sense, modesty and condescension; it has

has the same effect on the human mind that age produces on the works of master painters: it softens the strongest colouring, and mellows every thing it touches.

A large dinner-party were, on this memorable day, to dine in Grosvenor-square; the company invited consisted chiefly of the relations and connections of both families; the only exceptions were Mr. Tromp-son and Lady Racket, of course their daughter could not be excluded; for, notwithstanding the great progress Miss Montague daily gained on the affections of her Grace, she continued, though in rather a less degree, her former partiality for the gay, designing, insidious Mrs. Oxburn.

If my Reader should also find Mrs. Toovy at table, when he does not expect her, I have this apology to offer why I did not think it necessary to announce her, because, from her constant appearance there, I might as well have told you that the carving-fork was placed at her Grace's left-hand, or the appern in the middle of the course,

counse, which are events that happen every day.

Of whom the family and family connexions were composed, I shall make it my more serious business to explain; and as I call them over, those who have not been sufficiently spoken of by Miss Montague in her letters to Lady Auberry, owing to her little skill in investigating modern characters, by your leave, Reader, I shall present to you rather less disguised than they commonly present themselves.

I begin with Lady Jane Petworth, and shall treat her Ladyship as it is the *fashion* to treat all *such* sort of inestimable beings, pass over the fine qualities of her head and her heart, without praise and without notice.

She did not increase the circle by bringing with her Miss Fortescue, though the Duchess had condescended to hint that she might come if she would, that young Lady was gone to spend the day with her aunt, the Marchioness of Stars, and her cousins,

the Ladies Langtons, who, though they had not burthened her before with too much notice, were grown, of late, exceedingly fond of her society, and thought that morning or that day mispent, which did not bring them together; *particularly* since the report began to be blazed abroad that Miss Montague was certainly to be the wife of Mr. Lexington, who would as certainly be the Duke of Cleveland.

It was, to be sure, with the desire of having this agreeable news confirmed, that brought about this change in the Marchioness of Stars and her grown-up daughters, who never could bring themselves to believe the thing was possible. What else could it be, which made them all at once so cordially disposed towards their long-neglected and very pretty relation?

Another person there was, who, though not equally incredulous about this union, saw it in nearly the same point of view in which it appeared to the Marchioness, the
Lady

Lady Langtons, and all the extensive circle of their unmarried friends, namely, that Mr. Lexington might have bestowed himself better, at least more to their satisfaction.

Why Lord Francis Lexington should be as averse to this marriage as the Marchioness of Stars, is what I must endeavour to account for, before I introduce any other part of the company expected to dine in Grosvenor-square, on the 2d of March, 17—, which date my readers will be so good to remember, as it may yet be long to the hour of sitting down to table.

If Lady Jane Petworth's letters to Lady Auberry are remembered, and such letters should never be forgotten, it will be found by them, that the Duke of Cleveland and Colonel Montague, the father of Mary, lived together in habits of affection from their boyish days, founded first on the connection formed between the father of one of the parties and the mother of the other, but established more firmly afterwards by

a strong similarity in their honourable pursuits, and in the essential traits of their amiable dispositions.

Neither of the younger brothers had partaken very largely of this fraternal sort of friendship—Lord Henry had early turned his thoughts to the attainment of military glory, or he might have been admitted as a most worthy partaker of it. Lady Jane has told you the pecuniary difficulties under which he long laboured, and that they only ended with his life. I have nothing that can add to the melancholy detail—all the information that it is in my power to give, amounts to no more than an act of justice, which obliges me to declare what could not be told by any other body, viz. that though the Marquis was as much straitened in his finances as either of his younger brothers, and though Mr. Montague's allowance as a minor, was equally limited, yet every thing they could do was privately done to assist Lord Henry. And when the Duke succeeded to his

his father, though Henry could not be recalled to life, his Grace's munificence to the three orphan children this noble, unfortunate soldier left behind him, will be a lasting record of his bounty and of his humanity.

Lord Francis Lexington, I have said, was not received into the fraternal compact, which bound together the Marquis and Montague, nor had he any ambition to be so distinguished; it was more consonant to his taste and inclinations that those hours they passed in study or field exercise, should be spent by him in pursuit of his pleasures or his interest; one, though not the only, yet a principal source from which he drew the former, was a favourite mistress.—She was a pretty, country girl, and innocent, before he seduced her. I do not say the difficulty with which he attained the conquest added fame to his other long list of seductions; and yet he esteemed it of greater value than any of the rest, and I am going

to give you his reasons for so strange a preference.—

They, for so I shall distinguish the fallen females who have not moved in the sphere of ignorance or poverty, *they* were independent of his instructions or his patronage.—This poor girl was a perfect novice, and the possessor of no more than two gowns, one for every day and one for Sundays.—*They* were received into their *own* great world and by their own *great* friends, who do not much discountenance vice, provided it never comes amongst them without a veil upon her face. *She* was driven from society; and hooted at by all the decent inhabitants of her native hamlet, where vice will also sometimes force herself, but is banished from the humble roof as soon as her odious countenance is discovered. *They* are not ashamed of any thing but being found out in their intrigues, and can contemplate the author of their fall from virtue with unblushing effrontery: *She* feared nothing so much as the reproofs
of

of her own conscience, and was covered with confusion whenever her eyes met those of her betrayer.

Thus have I drawn a contrast between characters that, in the general acceptation, are erroneously thought not dissimilar; and must beg leave to make a much larger allowance of charitable sentiments for the victims of ignorance, perhaps of necessity, than for those who offer themselves the willing sacrifices to fashionable prostitution. Surely, if it was not for the lenity of the *times*, the same sentiment would act on every other mind as it does on my own, and splendid situations, instead of being an apology for sin, would mark out the daughters of education as exemplary subjects for the finger of contempt to point at.

This same poor, little, country girl, who I only drew from the shade of retirement to confront with *impures* in a more elevated situation, was secreted by Lord Francis Lexington in the dark, second floor of an

I 4.

humble

humble seller of cheese, butter, eggs, and a little of all sorts, somewhere in the environs of St. Giles's. The old woman of this scrap shop, happened to be a good sort of old woman; and as Lord Francis never visited his *dulcinea* but under a borrowed name, a borrowed character, and in a coat that an Israelite, of the greatest honour, would have thought dear at three shillings, the dealer believed they were married sure enough; and, as she used to tell her gossiping neighbours, man and wife to all intents and purposes.

This new intrigue was contrived with so much address, and kept so close, that it never has taken air, or been wafted through the regions of fashion, till I thought fit to make it accountable for some after-transactions, which would be, otherwise, not easily understood.

The only fruits of this illicit, never-revealed connection was one daughter; and though nothing could equal the privacy with which mother and child was concealed

sealed from all enquiring eyes, except the parsimony with which his Lordship supported them, yet, with the strongest exertions of œconomy, he soon found the expences of his half-starved family too heavy a burthen on his narrow paternal pittance to be borne with the least tolerable convenience.

Being at no time so infatuated by passion as to forget his *interest*, frequent calculations made him, at last, turn his thoughts on marriage, as the very best market to which he could carry his handsome person, his high rank, and his gentleman-like necessities.

He was really and undeniably handsome; his features well turned, his countenance open, his eyes lively, his teeth remarkably white, his smile enchanting, and his figure irresistible. The manners of Lord Francis were all of the same seducing complexion as his personal qualifications—mild, soft, insinuating, plausible; and had they bore any sort of relationship to

his soul, he would certainly have been what Miss Montague pronounced him, and what all the world would have pronounced him, who did not know him better than herself, a very charming man.

But, alas! I have to lament that his manners were no more of kindred to his soul than his soul was allied to honour, probity or sincerity. He had the shadow of all virtues without the substance of one, which, in an age of shadows, will pass; but a time must come when the substance only will stand the test of more than mortal scrutiny.

Rose, said he to his favourite mistress, whose name was Rosina, I am going to look out for a wife. Are you, my Lord, she meekly replied, and was silent.

He looked on her face and saw it bathed with tears, which fell on the infant that slept sweetly at her bosom, and wetted her's also; she had just taken it from the coarse cradle, which stood at her side, to perform the duties of a mother—these
duties

duties it would not be much longer in her power to perform—she was in the last stage of a rapid consumption.

Lord Francis, I have told you, was remarkably fond of his little protegee, and, on this occasion gave her, what, in his opinion, amounted to the tenderest proof of his unshaken affection, by assuring her he would choose the ugliest woman he could find, whose fortune was equal to his wants, the benefits of which *prudent* step, should be as much her's as his own. “ You
“ can never be jealous (said he), of *such*
“ a wife as I shall make choice of: She
“ shall not possess *one* beauty or *one* good
“ quality, if I can help it, to give you un-
“ easiness. The *convenient* match I have
“ in my eye, is a widow half blind,
“ half drunk, and more than half a
“ fool; but has such confounded sums
“ of healing gold in her power, as will
“ make all whole: and the devil himself,
“ if he was to see my widow, would not
I 6 “ accuse

“accuse me of laying out any love in the purchase.”

Rosina heard his defence with great mildness, and not less submission; but when he called upon her the next day, she was gone, not dead, but received into that first and greatest of all charitable institutions, the Magdalen Hospital, where the earliest spring of piety is guarded from the dangerous blast of example, strengthened by instruction, and nourished by kindness; where the lessons of penitence are not inculcated with stripes and scourges, and where hundreds of other penitents, as well as Rosina, have, or may, close their eyes for everlasting sleep with joyful hopes, who might, in any other situation, have yielded up their last perception in all the horrors of despair.

The good old woman, who was often Rosina's companion in the absence of Lord Francis, saw, with sorrow, the fatal decline into which she had fallen; and, happily for the invalid, possessed too little delicacy

licacy to hide either her own concern or the occasion of it, from the sufferer herself. This timely knowledge of the danger that threatened her was the first step to reflection—reflection produced a sigh of regret, and a silent wish that it was possible to amend the errors of her past conduct; that wish was succeeded by inclination to enter on the trial, and as the first step towards it, with all the humiliation of a mind deeply oppressed by the weight of its own guilt, she confessed to her astonished friend, that she was not the wife of the man who had visited her as such ever since she had been her lodger.

Notwithstanding our good shop-keeper was a truly religious, virtuous creature, she was not outrageously severe against the transgressions of her neighbour. Was I to hold up a precedent from no better authority than from this worthy plebeian, and desire my fair readers to give it their serious consideration, I should expect to have my request treated with derision; but

but the first lady of quality who gives me reason to suppose she has as much lenity towards her neighbour as this vender of small wares, I shall certainly bring it forward again, and strongly recommend it as an example worthy to be followed.

Rosina, when she made the discovery of her own situation, carefully concealed the name and rank of her destroyer, whilst she, to whom it was made, had no suspicions that led her to suppose he was any thing above the condition he chose to adopt, or enough of irritable curiosity to excite farther enquiries.

Finding her young lodger inclined to turn away from the road of vice, if she did but know in what path to wander without the aid of her seducer, and where she could be safe from the pursuit she feared he would make after her—this true friend not only spoke to her of the Magdalen Hospital, but procured her a book of its laws and institutions, which had been the subject of her studies, gratitude and admiration.

ration for a fortnight, prior to her last conversation with Lord Francis.

It was through the kind endeavours of her poor, but benevolent benefactress, that she found a ready admittance into the calm abode of penitence and peace. When she saw, for the last time, the destructive enemy of her repose—it was on a Wednesday; the fortunate day of her release from the bondage of a vicious connection succeeded to it. She had appeared before the Governors on the Thursday before, and was accepted with that excess of humanity that strengthened her good resolutions, and made the parting from her infant, the moment of her severest trial, less horrible than it was tender and pathetic.

I shall not harrow up your souls, my Readers, with the representation of this last scene. It is enough for your information that I should tell you the child was left in the care of the old woman, who was to present it to its father, with a note very badly written, and worse spelt, to say
where

where she had taken shelter for the short remainder of her days, to recommend the child to his protection, and to request that it might not be removed from its present situation, as, by means of her friend, she should, as long as her life lasted, be informed weekly of the dear baby's welfare.

The foundations of strong castles will totter at the convulsion of an earthquake, and souls impenetrable to the blast of heavy storms that may be seen gathering at a distance, will bend under a less shock when it comes upon them by surprise.

Lord Francis had long seen the declining state of his Mistress's health, and could even contemplate her hasty approaches to the gates of death with stoic philosophy; but no sooner was his Lordship informed that she had withdrawn herself from his protection, before the *final* summons arrived, than he felt, or fancied he felt, all the horrors of frenzy!

..He bewailed his sad destiny in strains so lamentable as to draw tears from the old woman,

woman, in whose sight he had been the moment before, in her own language, no better than he should be.

Every thing Rosina had asked of him, he promised to grant—pressed the infant to his breast—called upon the name of her mother by the appellation of his ungrateful Rosina—threw the child from him in a paroxysm of rage—walked madly about the chamber—held his clinched fist at his forehead—left the house in agonies not to be described—went home—dressed—examined his mirror—recalled his banished smiles—saw that composure was restored to his countenance—opened his lips, that his teeth might be seen to advantage—stepped into his chariot—drove to the opera—brushed into the box that contained his widow—plied her with flattery in the first act—with the tenderest of all love-speeches in the second—laid himself and all his *poverty* at her feet—and, in two days after, without the trouble of signing or sealing, became her lord; and what was
more

more to his satisfaction, uncontrouled master of her whole fortune, which might have been an object for any man's ambition to grasp at, whose claims on rank were below that of royalty.

Lady Francis was a mighty prudent woman in regard to her worldly affairs; and in the two days that elapsed from the delightful sounds of the opera to the solemn ceremony of the church, she had ventured to hint a very generous intention of presenting him with one hundred thousand pounds, about the fifth part of her possessions, as a nuptial present, and having the other four secured to her own use.

But Lord Francis, the most passionate of lovers, could not wait the tedious time of adjusting these sort of arrangements. Besides, Lord Francis was also the most delicate of mankind; he was hurt by a proposal that seemed to imply a doubt of his *honour*, such as that *she* who governed his whole soul's intire stock of affection; should think it necessary to draw her happiness,

piness, or secure her advantages independent of his endeavours to promote both the one and the other.

The widow was deeply smitten; and what could the widow do? Has it ever yet been told, that in a contest between the passions and the prudence of a widow, prudence got the upper hand? I believe not. I am sure it gained no such victory in the present instance. And here let me do justice to Lord Francis, the whitest trait in whose fame I might conceal, if I did not make a conscience of giving every body what is due to them. I scorn, therefore, to leave a blank which may be filled up to his Lordship's advantage, in telling my Readers, that being not only in the possession of the widow, but of the widow's mite also, he nevertheless continues, to this day, a polite husband. Nor will I throw a blot over this fair part of the page, by animadverting on the sweets of three thousand a year enjoyed by Lady Francis, being the jointure of a late husband, and
so

secured as not to be touched by any future one, unless by consent of the Lady herself; and that power redeemable at pleasure.

Lord Francis did not separate the child from its protectress till two years after the death of poor Rosina, which happened in something more than eight months from her passing through the gates of benevolence, which are in the immediate road to heaven, and never shut against those who are willing to enter—her translation was, doubtless, a happy one—her last breath quavered on the bright pinions of Faith, Hope cheered it, and Charity received it.

The noble father of the young Rosina continued his visits and the disguise under which he was accustomed to make them; he augmented the pay of the old woman a little, and would have been still more bountiful, but from the fear that his bounty might be the means of betraying him. His assumed name was Campellford

ford, and he passed for a subordinate officer of excise.

His grief for the death of the mother, bore no proportion to his fondness for the child; he thought her, as she really was, the most beautiful of all infants; before she could walk alone, he discovered that her movements predicted she would not be less majestic than beautiful; and, at the first sounds of articulation, he was gratified to hear that command and haughtiness mingled with her language. It was impossible his Lady should bring him children: this then was to be the child of his hopes, and the adopted heiress of his stupendous fortune, but without knowing even the name of her protector, or what right she had to his protection, till the whole of his concerted plan should be executed, or at least ripe for execution.

His brother, the Duke of Cleveland, had been married twelve months to the present Duchess; he had no child by his former marriage, nor did this promise to be

be more fruitful. Who then was to be the ostensible heir to a title on which he set no little value?—It was Henry Lexington, just arrived in England, the admiration of all beholders, and only three years older than his darling Rosina!

Many agreeable reveries did these considerations give birth to, and many a kiss, in the rapture of his heart, has he bestowed on the future Duchess of Cleveland. The more his thoughts were occupied how to bring about what he was determined, by some means or other, to accomplish, the more reason he saw to conceal from the whole world, as well as from Rosina, the illegitimacy of her birth, as *that* bar would be, of itself, sufficient to defeat all the plans cunning could lay down, or diligence execute, to place her at the head of a house so great, so truly honourable, as that from which he had sprung.

His mind, impregnated with these truths, which appeared, and in reality were
incon-

incontrovertible, he thought young as his daughter then was, having scarce turned the mid-way of her third year, should he any longer indulge himself with the sight of her, she might retain on her impressive memory such traces of his person, and such recollections of his fondness for her, that, in future, would probably be attended with no pleasant consequences.

Deterred by considerations so weighty, he slackened his visits to Rosina, and formed the resolution of sending her out of the kingdom with all possible expedition; but, not choosing to employ any person who was an inhabitant of this country, on so intricate a business, he dispatched a letter to his wine-merchant, one Mellows, who was settled at Lisbon, and, besides being his Lordship's favourite at school on account of his pliant disposition, had served his table with excellent wine ever since the lady who presided at it had furnished him with means.

When

When Lord Francis wrote to request his friend would come over to Britain, he did not hint on what occasion he wanted him, only desired he would be as private as he could, and pretend, if any body enquired what brought him to England, that he came on his own affairs.

Mellows, proud to receive his Lordship's commands, made haste to obey them. Several private interviews took place, and my Lord reposed in the honest merchant every sort of confidence, *that* only excepted which he was pre-determined neither man, woman or child should ever possess, I mean the secret of his being the father of Rosina.

The story he framed for the ear of his confidant was this—She was, he said, the daughter of a splendid house, the fruit of a lawful marriage, and heiress of immense property, but without parents, her's having fallen a sacrifice to family pride; that to prevent the orphan from coming under the same cruel fate, it was necessary she
should

should be brought up not only in total ignorance of her birth, but in another country, that her father's relations, who were the most implacable of all human beings, might not be able to trace out her residence; and, difficult as the task would be, he had undertaken it at the earnest request of her father, who was dearer to him than all the other friends he ever had or ever should have.

Mellows was effectually deceived—admired his Lordship's goodness of heart—hoped his efforts would be successful, and with no bad grace, made a tender of his services to the very utmost extent of his abilities. Lord Francis, who had long before drawn out a sketch of the plan by which he intended to proceed, immediately put it into the hands of his assisting agent, who, having perused it with much attention, gave his fullest approbation to the contents.

“ This paper, my friend,” said Lord Francis, “ informs you of little more than

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“ the

“ the route by which you are to conduct
“ your young charge to the place I have
“ destined for her abode, till all the
“ troubles are done away, which, at pre-
“ sent, bear a very threatening aspect.

“ I have told you (continued he), that
“ her fortune will be immense ; but before
“ some essential points are settled, she
“ must be entirely dependent on *me*,
“ which, for the sake of *my* own domestic
“ peace, as well as for the safety of the
“ child, it is necessary to manage with the
“ greatest circumspection, otherwise I
“ should be tormented by my Wife, who
“ is, like all other women, inclined to
“ jealousy, and Rosina would infallibly
“ be discovered by her family. My name,
“ therefore, must not appear in any one
“ part of the whole transaction. You
“ shall adopt the guardianship of my
“ Ward ; and all the remittances that I
“ make for her use, may be negociated in
“ your name ; or, in case of death, by
“ some other person, appointed by your-
“ self,

“ self, in whom you can confide for the
“ true discharge of a trust so important.

“ All I expect to be informed of, and
“ that in the most private way you can
“ devise, is the progress of her health,
“ beauty, and accomplishments, once in
“ two years, and sent to me immediately
“ after you have seen her at these ap-
“ pointed times I have specified in my
“ paper of written directions.”

Here his Lordship paused to take breath,
and Mellows testified his readiness to obey
all his injunctions, but looked as if he had
yet something to say, if he could use the
freedom of saying it.

Lord Francis saw the suppressed ques-
tion hover on his lips, and asked if he had
any thing to propose which might be more
agreeable to himself, or answer a better
general end than the system he had laid
down, which it was not yet too late to
mend, if it could be amended.

“ Nothing in the world, my Lord,” re-
plied the timid merchant, “ but I sup-

K 2

“ pose

"pose the young lady is born of Protestant parents?"

"O yes, I believe so," returned the great man, with an air of the most perfect indifference; "but, prithee, Mellows, what makes thee ask such a parson-like question?"

"Because I should suppose her principles of faith might be endangered, by sending her, as you mean to do, in a state of infancy to a nursery in Italy. I hardly see how she can possibly escape being a catholic.—Excuse my freedom, my Lord, but this seems a matter of some solid objection."

"Tush (said his Lordship), what signifies the religion of a handsome girl? Let them make a Roman Catholic of her if they will; we shall only have to unmake her, when she comes back to her own country. So let her take her chance—go she must; for if she stays here, a worse fate will befall her—a
"nursery

“nursery in Italy is her only place of safety.”

Here the conversation, which was beginning to take a serious turn, for want of argument, or for want of resolution on the merchant's part to support it any longer, fell back into its former channel, and was resumed by his Lordship in the following words.—

“When you settle the terms of reception for my Ward, at the nursery I have pointed out to you, with the Lady Abbess of which I was a little acquainted on my tour to the Continent, and knew her to be a woman of the first fashion, erudition, taste, and politeness; I say, when you place Rosina under her protection, you are to represent the case as it really is, and as I have represented it to you, with this only difference, that instead of *my* being her supposed guardian, or any ways interested about her, *you* must entirely take that part of the business on your-
K 3 self.

“ self. But as she is *intended* to fill one
“ of the *first* stations in this country,
“ she shall begin her career of splendor
“ from the time she becomes the pupil of
“ Madame ———. I shall therefore rely
“ on you, my friend, to see that her esta-
“ blishment, in regard to equipage and
“ attendants, is equal to that of a petit
“ princess. You cannot, in any of these
“ articles be too lavish, or in donations to
“ her protectress too liberal, either for my
“ purse or my inclinations.

“ Madame ——— should also be in-
“ formed that Rosina is, by nature, if I
“ am not very much deceived, haughty
“ and ambitious; which noble qualities of
“ a great soul, I shall *insist* upon it are
“ cherished, by complying with all her
“ wishes, rather than opposed by preach-
“ ing, or thwarted by contradiction.

“ One female servant only shall attend
“ her on the voyage, and *she* must not be
“ suffered to land in Italy, but return
“ back in the ship which carries you there.

“ Such

“ Such an one, fit for the purpose, I
“ would have you engage as soon as you
“ can, and let her wait at your lodgings
“ till the moment you are to embark and
“ go down the river; you will then fetch
“ the child from her present nurse, and
“ confide it to her care till you land,
“ when you are to hire a native of the
“ country to go with you on the journey,
“ who may be retained as one of the three
“ attendants that must be appointed
“ for her establishment; or, she may be
“ discharged on your arrival at the Con-
“ vent, as you shall think most eligible.”

What further instructions were to be given at this or any after confidential interview, is not necessary to be told; enough has been said of the plan laid down by Lord Francis for the education of the little *embrio* Duchess of Cleveland, to give my Readers a tolerable good guess of his full intentions, perhaps even more than it is for the interest of my history should be,

K 4 explained,

explained, or than I am willing to inform them.

This weighty affair being settled much to the internal peace of Lord Francis, and the lovely Rosina flying before the wind on her voyage to Naples, the first port at which her conductor had orders to land his golden fleece, the anxious father now directed the whole of his endeavours to obtain more than an *uncle's* share in the affections of his elegant nephew, who returned his interested caresses with as *much*, yet not *more* dutiful respect than those plain, honest marks of approbation, which the Duke bestowed upon him, when in fact he deserved them, but not on *all* occasions, as did the scheming Lord Francis.

The letters he received from Mr. Mellows, which were, by his own directions, no more than six in twice the same number of years, were all fraught with such astonishing accounts of his daughter's wonderful attractions, both personal and mental, that when it was proposed by the Duke
to

to his brother to send Mr. Lexington, at the age of twenty, to enter on the grand tour, Lord Francis, one year before that time arrived, took a trip to Lisbon, under the pretence of some slight indisposition, which did not require the attendance of his Lady in the capacity of either *nurse* or *physician*; though in both characters, particularly the latter, she was always teasingly officious when any thing ailed her poor, dear Francy; but she had fortunately so strong a dread of crossing the water, that her importunities to go with him were easily over-ruled.

On this secret expedition, the best companions of his Lordship's voyage were letters of credit on a banker, at Milan, for twenty thousand pounds, which, as soon as he landed, were put into the hands of his confidential friend, the merchant.

In all his transactions with this gentleman, he had not only been punctual but generous, for which reason it was impossible Mr. Mellows could refuse any request

K 5

made

made to him by his patron, otherwise that which he now came in person to solicit, might probably have been rejected, as it was soon to be attended with many inconveniencies.

“ My good friend,” said the specious Lord Francis, “ there is not another man
“ but yourself on whom I can lay hold as
“ my sheet-anchor in all difficult cases;
“ nor am I unmindful of your interest—I
“ do not forget that in the midst of all my
“ own perplexities, I have the pleasure to
“ tell you I have got you appointed Con-
“ sul at this place, and am the first to wish
“ you joy of your good fortune.”

Here was a master stroke of policy, which cut in all possible directions!—it paid a debt of gratitude for *past* services—it cleared the way to *new* ones—and placed the humble merchant in a medium of rank better fitted to serve the purposes for which his assistance was absolutely necessary.

Lord Francis made very polite returns to the transported acknowledgments such
a favour

a favour demanded. It was an honour, it was a happiness of which he was totally unworthy. But not to disgrace his noble patron, he should try to acquit the trust reposed in him with faithfulness, diligence, due humility to the *Crown*, and everlasting submission to his Lordship!

“ I only ask the continuance of your
“ friendship (my Lord replied), I have no
“ claims on your submission; your past
“ services sets you on a footing, in my estimation, not below those whose situations may be more upon an equality
“ with my own. But, my dear Mellows,
“ if by procuring this appointment I give
“ you pleasure, I am going to put it in
“ your power to return it to me in satisfaction seven-fold!”

Had his Lordship committed an act of atrocity, for which the laws of his country condemned him to suffer death, so warm, so over-flowing was the new Consul's gratitude, that I question if he would not, on such an occasion, have offered to become

his substitute; and, to have saved my Lord's neck, have slipped his own into the collar! Can it therefore be doubted that he listened with complacency, whilst Lord Francis unfolded the mission on which he meant to employ him, or that he joyfully assented to conduct the business with all his address, and through all its retrograde movements.

“ I have (said his Lordship), procured
“ you leave of absence from your post for
“ six or eight months, in which time you
“ will make a voyage to Italy, and take
“ Rosina out of her convent. But prior
“ to her removal from thence, secure for
“ her reception the most capital house
“ that is vacant in Milan, and let it be furnished in a style of magnificence, that
“ like herself---like what you assure me is
“ the style of her own perfections, both
“ they and their mistress stand unrivalled
“ in the sight of all *amateurs*, whether of
“ *splendor* or of *beauty*.

The

The Consul bowed—the Consul smiled
—and his patron continued—

“ I would have you also engage in the
“ double capacity of *chaperone* and super-
“ intendant of her family, some elderly
“ woman of rank and high connections,
“ whose finances may make such a situa-
“ tion not only advantageous but eligible.
“ There are always enough of poor, de-
“ cayed nobility in *every* clime, particu-
“ larly on the *Continent*, who would be
“ honoured by such a proposal ; *so* that
“ you will have no difficulty in finding
“ more than one of the description we
“ want. There are many who will offer
“ themselves to your choice, but remem-
“ ber the person you choose for this office
“ of superintendant must be of exalted
“ rank, even if her years should be fewer,
“ or her skill in domestic management
“ less; any thing I would rather should
“ be given up than *birth*—Birth, Mr.
“ Mellows, *birth* I cannot dispense with;
“ every

“ every other smaller convenience must
“ yield to this *great* consideration.

“ I moreover mean that you shall com-
“ pliment the lady who becomes the com-
“ panion of Rosina with a hundred pounds
“ a quarter, as long as her attendance is
“ required. It is a sum that would be
“ equal to the demands of an Italian
“ Princess, and I should not suppose it
“ *well* bestowed if it does not purchase us
“ a Countess at *least*. On no considera-
“ tion let her be one of that sort who is
“ forgotten by the *world*, or laid by as out
“ of *date* or *fashion*. Rosina's *chaperons*
“ must be entitled, by her own connec-
“ tions, to bring my Ward forward in the
“ highest circles.”

Whilst Lord Francis was giving these
particular directions, Mellows made mi-
nutes of them in his pocket-book, very
much to his Lordship's satisfaction, who,
desiring to look over that part only which
concerned his orders about the Rank of
Rosina's companion, declared it to be the
exact

exact transcript of his meaning, and proceeded to enlarge on the subject, which had so well employed the ready and swift pencil of his friend, the Consul.

“ Though I have brought with me, and
“ deposited in your hands, letters of credit
“ for twenty thousand pounds, it is not
“ with the design of limiting your ex-
“ pences—*no*, they are without *limitation* ;
“ enlarge them to what scale you please,
“ they *shall* be answered. Here is also a
“ casket of jewels, give them to Rosina,
“ tell her they belong to her, and were
“ the *purchase* of her father. Should she
“ wish to make additions to them, as it is
“ probable she may, bid her not fear that
“ she will offend her guardian by so doing,
“ and to what amount she pleases: but
“ remember it must be Mr. Mellows, and
“ *not* Lord Francis Lexington, who is to
“ represent the guardian alluded to.

“ I give you no certain directions as to
“ the arrangements of her equipages, suite
“ and wardrobe; only I recommend it to
“ your

“ your consideration that you cannot possibly be *too* profuse in these articles, or
“ in the domestic expences of her household : and now, my friend (he added),
“ close your memorandum book, I shall
“ load it with no more commissions.

The Consul did as he was directed, and again lent his whole attention, in silent admiration of the wonderful greatness and goodness of his noble patron, whilst the noble patron himself began, in this manner, further to unfold his well-wove tissue of art and stratagem.

“ In the breast of a friend so long tried,
“ so faithful, so worthy of trust, I shall
“ not repose my confidence by halves,
“ but having told you my plan of taking
“ Rosina from her convent, I will candidly tell you what are my motives, and
“ and though they *are* and ever will be
“ covered to all the world but yourself, I
“ shall not think my secret less secure for
“ explaining the whole of my intentions
“ to you without disguise.

“ Rosina's

“ Rosina’s expectations are not circum-
“ scribed within a less circle than one-
“ third beyond the half of one million
“ sterling—I have a *Nephew* who must also
“ inherit the high fortunes and higher
“ honours of his family. Rosina is dear
“ to me from the habits of intimacy on
“ which I lived with her *Father*—my Ne-
“ phew has still nearer claims by consan-
“ guinity. It is, therefore, highly natu-
“ ral that I should wish to see these two
“ objects of my affections united—and
“ what, you will ask, is there to prevent
“ this union ?

“ Indeed I should (replied the Consul),
“ if I could have taken the liberty to in-
“ terrupt your Lordship.”

“ Why then, I will tell you, Mellows,
“ —my brother, the Duke, would rather
“ his titles should be extinct, and his
“ estates go to an hospital, than that *his*
“ heir should marry into *that* family from
“ which Rosina is descended, though in
“ every respect as distinguished and as
“ opulent

“ opulent as his own ; yet I must acknow-
“ ledge the cause of this strange disgust is
“ not without *some* sort of foundation in
“ reason, but *that* is his *own* business, and
“ I shall avoid any confidential disco-
“ veries that do not immediately concern
“ myself. It is enough that I assure you
“ I am in no manner bound by the *same*
“ prejudices ; on the contrary, I am de-
“ termined my Nephew *shall* be the hus-
“ band of my Ward. It has ever been
“ with a view to this connection that I
“ have caused her to be brought up in a
“ foreign country, where her person and
“ manners receive every advantage, and
“ her birth cannot be discovered.

“ I have carried my projections still fur-
“ ther, for when this match, so wonderfully
“ advantageous for my Nephew, is abso-
“ lutely concluded, as I mean it shall
“ be, in defiance of the Duke's old piques,
“ which ought long ago to have subsided,
“ though I doubt they never will subside,
“ I say, when I have brought my scheme
“ to

“ to perfection, as long as my brother
“ lives, the secret of whose daughter Ro-
“ fina is *must* be preserved; for which
“ reason, I choose she shall be a *reputed*
“ Italian lady—and this puts me in mind
“ that the most *material* part of your di-
“ rections have been omitted, so take out
“ your pocket-book, and make this me-
“ morandum—that you are to procure for
“ Rosina a Marquesite, before she is
“ brought from the nursery.

“ You will now,” said his Lordship,
the additional memorandum being insert-
ed, “ pretty well understand the nature of
“ that negociation on which you are going
“ to enter. My Nephew will begin his
“ travels in ten months—Milan is the
“ place at which all our young men choose
“ to spend a greater portion of their time
“ than either at Paris, Naples, or Rome,
“ because there are certainly more native
“ beauties, and more incitements to plea-
“ sure, than is to be met with in either
“ of these more overgrown but less cap-
“ tivating

“ tivating cities; and it is for this reason
“ that I have preferred Milan to all other
“ situations for the residence of Rosina,
“ and the stage on which we shall com-
“ mence our scene of action.

“ The charms, grace, and accomplish-
“ ments you tell me she is possessed of,
“ together with her partiality for the Eng-
“ lish language, and the purity with which
“ she speaks it, cannot fail to make her a
“ magnet of considerable attraction to all
“ British travellers; but *that* is not *my*
“ object, you must prevent her from being
“ seen *till* the arrival of Lexington at Mi-
“ lan, which, if you give her a *chaperone*
“ of any *cleverness*, may be easily managed
“ by her contrivance—so might Lexing-
“ ton’s introduction to my Ward—so
“ might *their* intimacy be forwarded.—In
“ short, it will be much in the power of
“ her female companion to bring about
“ the completion of all my wishes; in
“ which case, you may hint to her that so
“ singular

“singular a service shall not go unrewarded.”

I have now opened to my readers as much of Lord Francis's history, his intentions, his plans, and operations, as will account to them why I said at the beginning of my Narrative—that though his Lordship could not, like the Marchioness of Stars and her *amiable* daughters, doubt that a union was intended between Henry Lexington and Mary Montague, yet that he would have been glad to *disbelieve* it, had it been possible to cheat himself into so absurd a belief. But alas! the authority from which he gained his intelligence brought with it a dreadful certainty, and left all hope of being able to accomplish the favourite project far, very far behind.

Before I quite dismiss the subject, and give leave for my company to assemble round the dinner table, I must say a word or two more about his Lordship—about the Consul—about the travels of Lexington—and about the beautiful Rosina, which

which I will try to crowd into one or two pages; at the farthest it shall not exceed half a dozen, if I can help it.

Every thing was performed by the Consul with the exactest precision; and the beautiful Rosina, under the title of Marchioness Felicia, placed at the head of her brilliant establishment, with exactly such a kind of superintendant as would have been the choice of Lord Francis himself, had he been to have made the election. But the preparation for all this aggrandisement took up more time to accomplish than had entered into the calculation of her Father or Mellows, and Mr. Lexington had actually passed through Milan before they were completed. A still more unfortunate circumstance militated against their plan of operations, for not being particularly fascinated by either the place or people, on his return he only staid four days, to get rid of a troublesome cold. In all that time he did not leave his hotel, though the Marchioness was ready for his reception,

reception, and her *chaperone*, that is Viscountess Melleford, laying in wait to fulfil the engagement she had condescended to accept of bringing them together.

Thus were their expensive traps set to no purpose, for Mr. Lexington escaped them all. It is true Lord Francis had strongly recommended to his Nephew the *beauties* and the *beautiful* women of Milan. When he came back to his own dear country, and told this provident uncle he had seen nothing animate, or inanimate, at Milan, that was worth observation, the agony of his suppressed agitation is not to be defined—"What, (said he) have you
" seen *no* lovely woman there? Is it possible that there is not *one* more celebrated than all the rest of her sex for
" beauty, grace, refinement, and all sorts
" of feminine accomplishments?"

" I beg your pardon, (he replied) I did
" indeed *hear* of a perfect phenomenon in
" grace, beauty, and accomplishments, the
" young

“ young Marchioness Felicia, just taken
“ from a convent, and I was told is so
“ wonderfully handsome, that every man
“ who looks at her has a chance to lose
“ his senses ; I therefore, my dear Uncle,
“ finding I had too few to purchase food
“ for my curiosity at their expence, prudently
“ deferred making the experiment,
“ till the price of a glance at her charms
“ has fallen, or my stock of reason has
“ advanced.”

Lord Francis was delighted with the praises bestowed on his daughter, they seemed to mellow the shock of his first bitter disappointment.—It is not *all* over—he has not seen her—he may yet see her—Those were his thoughts, but he did not clothe them in language ; he only said in reply to Lexington—

“ I find, young man, you have not
“ made half the observations that are to
“ be made on a foreign tour ; whether
“ you or your governor are to blame I
“ cannot

" cannot determine, however I would
" advise you to be in readiness for another,
" and I hope a more profitable one."

" I am always ready to receive im-
" provements (said the lively Lexington)
" if they will come to *me*, and not give
" me the trouble of running about in
" pursuit of them."

" Well, but Henry, my dear boy, sup-
" pose *I* am inclined to take a trip over
" the same ground *you* have so lately tra-
" velled, should you have any objection
" to favour me with your company? I
" really have very serious intentions to
" cross the Alps, merely for the benefit of
" my health, and only wait the first ap-
" proach of spring to begin my excur-
" sion."

" Certainly, my Lord, (said Henry) as
" I have travelled once to please myself,
" and been disappointed, my next flight
" to the Continent will afford me at least
" one certain satisfaction, the very great
" one of obeying your commands."——

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L

Here

Here the conversation dropped. Henry thought of it no more, but his scheming Uncle thought of nothing else.

This closes the account of Lord Francis—though I wish to add to it, by way of appendage, that the first appearance of Miss Montague in his Brother's family had given an electrical shock to his hopes, and shaken them to their very foundation; her sweet attractive features had more horrors for *him* than if she had carried on her shoulders the head of Medusa; his lips *praised* her, but his heart *hated* her; his words were sweet as honey, but his thoughts were as bitter as gall:—nobody flattered Mary, nobody caressed her so much as Lord Francis, yet nobody, not even her *own sex*, wished her all manner of mischief so fervently as he did.

He would say to her—"My dear child,
"you are certainly the most amiable of
"all human beings; nobody can dote on
"you as I do *except* the Duke; it might
"look like ostentation to say I love you
"as

“ as *well* as he does ; but *this* I know, that
“ if you was my *own* daughter, it is im-
“ possible I should love you better.” The
most engaging smile of sincerity, the most
manly openness of countenance accom-
panied these often *repeated* professions.
How then could she doubt them ?

He had a friend who knew every cor-
ner of his crooked soul but one—in that
one was deposited the only secret he wished
to keep from the sight of all men, except
the Consul at Lisbon.

Of this half-informed friend I have al-
ready spoken—It was the great lawyer,
Mr. Andrew Solemn, a successful lawyer,
a lawyer of notoriety, in whose custody
Lord Francis had lodged the most private
thoughts of his dissimulating mind.—To
him had been freely revealed the extreme
disgust he had taken to his Brother’s fa-
vourite, and his repugnance to her be-
coming the wife of his Nephew.

The ostensible cause for this unaccount-
able dislike, both of the *lady* and the

L 2

union,

union, was not placed to its *true* account, that of clashing with his interested views for the establishment of Rosina—no such *name* or *person* had ever been mentioned to his learned friend and privy counsellor—on the contrary, he pretended it was a *natural* sentiment of antipathy that sprang from the ashes of her father, and gained much credit, because his aversion to Colonel Montague, neither before or after his death, ever wore any sort of *disguise*, but had invariably shewn itself in all the *nakedness* of malice.—This friend of Lord Francis was also the friend of Sir Ashton Montague.

I have now actually done with his Lordship, and he may sit down to dinner in Grosvenor-square, whilst I hand out a few more of the same party to exhibit them before my polished readers, not in the tight, fabricated robes of *artifice*, but in the loose, flowing robes of their own natural dispositions.

Lady

Lady Francis you may, if you please, sit down by your dear Francy; enough has been said of you already—nature has given you excellent talents for mischief, but your adherence to a certain unfeminine imperfection has overwhelmed them.

Lady Elizabeth Jones, though very odd, positive, overbearing, a lady of *knock-me-down* argumentations, unlearned in those little seducing condescensions so likely to conciliate *universal* good will, is, notwithstanding, in all other points of view, a *respectable* character; she is charitable where charity is a virtue—and if her fame in this respect is not equal to her merit, it is because she will not help to throw a veil over those *fashionable* inadvertencies, many of which the fashionable world are disposed to treat with more lenity than disapprobation. *This* (she says) is giving a sort of negative countenance to vice, and should be abolished, holding it as the most obstinate of *all* her opinions, that where

no censure follows, *no* reformation is to be expected.

Besides this eccentricity of judgment, which ran counter to one half of the great world, and besides the unceasing clamour of rage with which she contradicted the other moiety, yet she was, I aver, a well-meaning woman, and might have been accounted a *wise* one, but for a twist in her brain, which prevented Reason from performing, by her usual systematic operation, her cunning office of regulating the human ideas.

She has too much consideration for *ancient* principles, and too little for *modern* levities, to be a successful candidate for *public* applause; and on the list of *agreeable* companions her name must *not* be entered; but was I to choose a friend that would not *flatter* nor *betray* me, Lady Elizabeth Jones should be the person. With this tribute of praise I dismiss your Ladyship—go and take your station by the side of
Miss

Miss Montague ; she has made an *interest* in your heart ; you *worry* and *torment* her, but you will never *abuse* or *forsake* her.

I will not say quite so much for the Miss Lexingtons, whose turn it is now to be brought forward in the circle of relations assembled in Grosvenor Square the very day when the message was expected to return from Riversdale ; so great was the impatience of the Duke and Duchess of Cleveland to present their charming Ward to all the connections of the family as *their* future Neice.

Miss Lexington is a learned lady, and the most unbending of all *female* pedants, except to those whose rank and consequence are *much* superior to her own, or when engaged in pursuit of young *unprovided-for* gentlemen, who perhaps have been heard to declare they would rather marry the Witch of Endor than be the husband of a *classical* scholar in petticoats. On such occasions as these, she is as supple as the pliant willow, and conceals her

L 4

acquire-

acquirements in the *dead* languages with rather more circumspection than our modern women of fashion conceal their *intrigues*.

She had long been made acquainted with her Brother's predilection for the Grand-daughter of Lady Auberry, on whom, in paying successful court to the Duchess, she is forced to bestow a large portion of civility; *but* at the Blue Stocking Club, where she is a distinguished member, the mask is taken off, and she laments that her Brother is going to throw himself away on a *filly* unlettered *girl*, who can neither read an ode in *Horace*, or translate one page of Epictetus. Mr. Lexington, she will add, has an infinity of knowledge, and how he so egregiously erred in making *such* a choice, is one of those mysteries that no *rational* cause can be assigned for.

There is yet a better and much stronger reason *why* Miss Lexington does not contemplate with any sort of satisfaction the approach of Hymen at her Brother's door :
—she

—she is now supreme in his family, presides at his table; and what in the world is all her superlative knowledge good for, if it cannot drive away the saffron-rooted deity when he advances with his flaming torch to light a wife into the house, which will of course be naturally used to conduct his sisters out of it. This consequently makes a deep impression on her spirits, and adds nothing to her good humour.

Miss Maria Lexington is not a learned lady, neither presides she at her Brother's table; but then she does not despair of soon figuring away at her own, having a score proper men in her eye, either of whom she thinks will make a good husband, by whom she should at least escape from the tyranny of her domineering governante; and yet Maria is not *less* averse to this marriage, or a bit more the friend of Miss Montague than her elder sister.—It is *not* because Mary has *too* little learning, *but* because she has *too* much beauty—it is *not* because she is unable to translate

• L 5. Epictetus,

Epietetus, but because Maria translates into the language of admiration every eye-beam that is cast upon Miss Montague by the other sex.—Put all these becauses together, kind reader, and if thou art thyself of *Envy's breed*, or ever created that agreeable sensation in the breast of *another*, thou will want no other clue to lead thee through the winding labyrinths of these double-hearted sisters; *one* heart full of affection to Miss Montague, and *another* impregnated with aversion for Miss Montague.

I do not like to overload my characters, which may easily be done, whether they are saddled with too many good or bad qualities; I do not like to hold up a gossiping tale, as other gossips sometimes will do, to lengthen the number of their pages, to try the patience of their readers, or establish their own fame for spinning out long sentiments, which have nothing to do with the main thread of their discourse—but I dearly love to surprise and delight my

my Readers with some marvellous event, or the introduction of persons on my stage of action, who come there as unexpected as good fortune to the aid of miserable, despairing indigence.—And the appearance of Lord Auberry in Grosvenor Square to celebrate the approaching espousals of Miss Montague with his rival, though it may not *transport*; cannot fail to *astonish* them.

One would have thought his Lordship was the last man in the world to be there on *such* an occasion; and the only one perhaps who ought not to have accepted the invitation; but he was invited, and he did accept it. His soul was not of that milk and water complexion to shrink from danger, and too well clothed in disguise to fear detection. What he *had* avowed, he *would* stand to; and though he had been called upon even to attend them to the altar, he would *not* have declined it: he would have attended them to the very verge of Hy-men's Court, but *there* the procession *must* have

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have stopped, and the end *would have been fatal.*

The manœuvre of making Lord Auberry a party, was in consequence of one of those whims which wilful woman *often* lays hold of, and *seldom* lets go. The arguments used by her Grace, to bring over the Duke and Lady Jane Petworth to her own opinion, were not so devoid of rationality, as to be excluded from a place in these pages.

“ It has lately become *too* much the
“ fashion (said the Duchess of Cleveland)
“ for young men of rank, who have no
“ better way of amusing themselves, to
“ make poppets of our sex, to dance us
“ about on wires, to exhibit us on all oc-
“ casions as objects of public notice, per-
“ haps of public admiration, as long as it
“ pleases their own idle fancies; but hav-
“ ing called us into action, they soon grow
“ tired of playing the *posture master*, hide
“ their heads behind the scenes, and de-
“ clare they were only in *jest*—nay, it is
“ better

“ better than I expect from them, if they
“ do not join in the cry of ridicule, which
“ will make itself heard through the wide
“ circle where these sort of *petite* infideli-
“ ties are acted. Now, as often as this
“ happens, the *venom* of report lights *al-*
“ *ways* on the defenceless poppet, whilst
“ the quack, by whose magic influence
“ we have been made to advance, or
“ forced to retreat, escapes without incur-
“ ring either shame or censure.—Several
“ instances, besides that of Lord Auberry,
“ I have known, where, on the very
“ threshold of matrimony, a poor foolish
“ girl is left in the lurch, and the retiring
“ lover has either *denied* the thing alto-
“ gether, or, in the multiplicity of his *other*
“ engagements, *forgot* the ceremony of
“ taking leave.”

“ But, my dear, (observed the Duke)
“ what has this allusion to do in the
“ present case?—The question is, whether
“ it will not be imposing a *too* difficult
“ task on our timid Ward, to bring her
“ *old*

“ *old* lover before her on the very day in
“ which she will openly receive the de-
“ clarations of her *new* one ?”

Lady Jane did not interrupt her Grace,
—she wished her to proceed—there was
something in her words that began to clear
her perception, and she listened with at-
tention, in hopes it would be fully en-
lightened.

“ Duke (replied this predetermined con-
“ queress of all opposition), though your
“ question involves in it a number of
“ other cares, though particularly appli-
“ cable to Lord Auberry and Miss Mon-
“ tague, I will not tire out your patience
“ by carrying you out of your own sub-
“ ject, but come immediately to the point,
“ and confine myself merely to them.—
“ Lord Auberry has been engaged to Miss
“ Montague—of this truth *we* are con-
“ vinced, though *he* disavows any such en-
“ gagement—even to yourself he denies it,
“ in terms neither vague or indecisive.—
“ You *know* that he *has* loved her, but
“ you.

“ you *think* that he loves her no longer ;
“ that he considers her *now* with *more*
“ than indifference—I tell you, Duke, *this*
“ indifference is all pretence, the very ex-
“ treme of finesse—and it is to be seen
“ with the sight of half an eye, that he
“ still loves her to madness.”——“ Do you
“ conceive me, Lady Jane ?”

“ Perfectly, Madam, and must confess
“ that I cannot but adopt your opinion ;
“ I believe *other* women may have claims
“ on his Lordship’s *honour*, but I am per-
“ suaded it is Miss Montague *only* who has
“ any share in his affections.”

“ Do you grant *this*, my Lord ?” asked
the Duchefs.

“ Ladies (he said) were so much more
“ keen-sighted than men in these matters,
“ that he was inclined rather to see with
“ their eyes than his own:—and yet,
“ (added he) if Auberry is in love with
“ my Ward, he has the oddest way of
“ shewing it I ever saw in my life ; but
“ the more you convince me of a truth so
“ *wonderful*,

“ *wonderful*, the more strongly it appears
 “ to me that your plan of bringing him
 “ and Lexington together, is by no means
 “ *necessary* to the safety or happiness of
 “ either party. Besides, it *must* be the
 “ disturber of Miss Montague’s serenity ;
 “ for where is there a woman who can
 “ meet with composure the man by whom
 “ she has been forsaken and insulted ?”

Actuated by the same sentiment, both
 the ladies exclaimed at once, “ *that woman*
 “ *is Mary Montague.*”

“ Provided, he returned, I could admit
 “ of one exception to my general remark.
 “ —You have not, I believe, misnamed
 “ the heroine—yet why, *Duchess*, will
 “ you insist on bringing her to a meeting
 “ that must be attended with pain, if not
 “ with exposure ?”

“ Do you love your Nephew ?” said her
 Grace.

“ What a question !”

“ I will tell you why I ask it, and when
 “ I have done so, if you do not allow my
 “ reasons.

“ reasons to be founded in probability, I
“ shall then try to correct them.”

Here was a mighty condescending acknowledgment—her auditors were so little prepared to expect it, that they remained silent, and her Grace continued.

“ There is *no* period in the life of man
“ or woman *half* so critical, or that re-
“ quires more consideration, than *in* the
“ formation of that sort of union which
“ nothing has the power of dissolving but
“ *death* or *infamy*.—Marriage being the
“ *beginning* or the *end* of all human felicity,
“ cannot be entered into with *too* much
“ caution.—What is it that has been the
“ most prevalent motive with at least one
“ half of our modern wives, who have
“ disgraced their husbands, destroyed the
“ peace of their families, and brought
“ themselves to destruction?—What, but
“ the stale excuse of a prior attachment?
“ —Lexington adores Miss Montague—
“ *She* imagines her heart to be equally well-
“ disposed towards him—Now, as their
“ happiness

“ happiness is separately and mutually
“ dear to us, I would therefore convince
“ *them*, and be convinced myself, that her
“ preference for my Nephew is not found-
“ ed on *error*, but on *certainly*; that it is
“ not the caprice of a moment, but a sen-
“ timent that will be lasting and per-
“ manent. I believe her soul to be the
“ very seat of sincerity, but I know she
“ is too inexperienced to be properly ac-
“ quainted with the deceitfulness of a
“ tender heart, or to find out all its secret
“ avenues.”

“ Why surely,” interrupted the Duke,
with his eyes stretched open to the extent
of their dimensions, “ you do not think
“ that she has accepted *Lexington*, and is
“ still in love with AUBERRY?”

“ *Miss Montague* accept your Nephew,
“ yet retain her partiality for Lord Au-
“ berry—*such* a supposition is incompa-
“ tible with the purity of her nature.”—
This was said by Lady Jane—and she
added with a smile—“ I am sure when the
“ Duchess

“ Duchefs has concluded her observations,
“ we fhall find them as full of propriety
“ as they are free from fufpicions.”

“ Have patience, good people, (faid her
“ Grace) and I will fufficiently explain
“ myfelf to make you underftand, that
“ my fending to invite Lord Auberry on
“ my prefent fuggeltions do not proceed
“ from doubts that can involve Mifs Mon-
“ tague in any accusation of weaknefs or
“ duplicity.—Have I not faid that *ſhe will*
“ ftand the trial which I, with the beſt
“ deſign in the world, am preparing for
“ her ; yet if I really thought her ſtrength
“ was not equal to the combat, ſtill I
“ would perfiſt in bringing them together.
“ —I hate concealed fires, which, though
“ apparently ſmothered, may be rekin-
“ dled, and much miſchief enſue.—Had
“ we not better provide againſt diſagree-
“ able contingencies, by examining the
“ danger in every poſſible point of view,
“ to ſee it clearly is the way to prevent it
“ effectually.—Why, Duke, did you
“ expreſs

“ exprefs so much furprise on my observ-
“ ing that Miss Montague was too inex-
“ perienced to be acquainted with all the
“ avenues which lead to her heart? The
“ observation carried with it no imputa-
“ tion of ignorance, but what is common
“ to all girls in a similar situation with
“ her own.—What charge of instability
“ did it leave on her conduct?—None,
“ but what her propriety will do away,
“ and give additional lustre to the staple
“ virtues of her mind.—Believe me,
“ Duke, what I have proposed is the
“ only method to establish the felicity of
“ our young people.—If Miss Montague
“ has no secret preference that lurks about
“ her heart for Lord Auberry, his pre-
“ sence can neither disturb or distress her :
“ —if it should be otherwise, it will be
“ better for them both that Lexington
“ should crown his head with willows,
“ than that the heart of his wife should
“ palpitate at the approach of any man
“ but himself. Such a misfortune may
“ be

“ be avoided, but never can be repaired.
“ Let him come, and be the mortified
“ spectator of Henry’s triumph, of Miss
“ Montague’s indifference to himself, and
“ of his own defeat.”

The Duke hesitated.—“ Would not the
“ invitation convey more of insult than
“ of civility?” he asked.

“ Certainly no, (was her reply) we in-
“ vite him only as the cousin of Miss
“ Montague, and on the present occasion
“ it would be hardly pardonable to pass
“ him over, who, except Sir Ashton Mon-
“ tague, is her nearest male relation. I
“ shall send a card to the latter, (she
“ added) though I know he is out of
“ town, but these are forms which cannot
“ be dispensed with.”

I must, for brevity’s sake, suppose all
the world will be as well pleased with the
Duchess of Cleveland’s mode of reason-
ing, as were the Duke, Lady Jane Pet-
worth, and myself; for was I to ask them
the question, and they should testify any
disapprobation,

disapprobation, I could not stay to put them in good humour; the whole party are setting down to table, where it is as much my business to follow them as it is incumbent on a short-hand writer to attend the Houses of Parliament.—What else would become of the brilliant speeches said to be made there? though it happens to be a mistake, for it is a well-known fact that they are *made* and *studied* at home, and only brought *there* to be repeated.—The conclusion to my inference is this—Who is there that can tell you what passed before, at, and after dinner in Grosvenor-Square, if I am not on the spot to report it?

Miss Montague was acquainted with the message to Lord Auberry prior to its being sent away. When the Duchess asked if she should have any objection to his being invited?—"None in the world," (she replied) he has a right to my civility, as being connected with my mother's family; in all other respects, I
" am

“ am quite as indifferent to his presence

“ as his absence.”

“ It will do, (said her Grace afterwards

“ to Lady Jane) and this charming girl

“ will rise superior even to *our* expecta-

“ tion.”

All the company were got together before Lord Auberry made his appearance, and Miss Montague had received joy from them with that sort of expressive happiness beaming from her intelligent countenance, that announced in lively characters innate dignity and innate composure, unmixed with exultation, coquetry, or confusion. Her dress for the occasion had been presented to her by the Duchess, simple in its appearance, but in reality, of immense costliness; my female readers will perhaps want to know what it was made of. Can I have the conscience to refuse them?—By no means—it was a round gown made up in the plainest manner, but composed of Brussels point, which for the fineness of its texture, might have vied
with

with the head-dress of many court ladies on a birth-day night. Her turban and handkerchief were of the same materials, though not put on by the meretricious hands of fashion; nor did she look so much like Venus attired by the Graces, as she resembled Simplicity, the blushing daughter of Nature, decently arrayed by her attendant virtues, Ease, Neatness, and Modesty. She wore no jewels, but her lovely arms and neck were encircled with pearls; she had roses of the same on her shoes, and all her other ornaments, like the pure mind of the wearer, were immaculate, without spot, and without blemish.

Interesting, amiable Modesty! how comes it that thou art discarded from the toilets of so many Lady Charlotte's, Lady Susan's, Honourable and dishonourable Misses? Is it, poor Modesty, that thou hast abandoned them? or have they rudely forbidden thy attendance? Have they turned thee quite away, to make room for a more modern hand-maid? Yes, it is too true,

true, *Licentiousness* has supplanted *thee*; it is *she* that gives the matronly swell to the maiden figure; it is *she* that tears from the bosom of beauty the veil with which thou, O divine Modesty! had carefully concealed it.—Weep not—despair not—there are yet a thousand Miss Montague's to cherish and give thee consequence.

I cannot help crying out thus, when I daily hear of the outrages committed against decency by the present mode; and who is there in their perfect senses that will not exclaim with me—Have these infatuated girls *no* mothers, *no* fathers, *no* brothers, to stop the progress of these evils?—or is it not worth their pains to preserve a *daughter*, or a *sister* from disgrace?

The Duchess of C'eveland never appeared more sensible of her own importance than in the act of contemplating the jewel of high price, which she looked upon herself as being the chief means of entailing on her husband's family. She ob-

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M

served

served, that neither Mrs. Oxburn, or the Miss Lexingtons, seemed to understand the extent of its value ; and said, in a tone which shewed she had penetrated into their thoughts, at the same time addressing herself to Miss Montague only, though all the other ladies were standing round her—
“ I think it is quite fortunate that we do
“ not go into public this evening.”—
“ Why so, Duchess,” replied the beautiful unconscious Mary ?

“ Because,” returned she, looking full at Mrs. Oxburn, and next on the Misses,
“ I am persuaded, my dear, you cannot
“ be seen by young *married* women, or
“ young ladies who are not *provided* for,
“ without *too* much *suppressed* approbation:
“ Admiration concealed raises envy—en-
“ vy creates bile—and bile ill-humour.
“ Now, you look so charming, that the
“ very sight of you would spoil all the
“ complexions that are natural in the cir-
“ cles of fashion.”

Neither

Neither Miss Lexington or Maria wore rouge, and it was therefore impossible for them to hide the flush of *detection* that unbidden sprung to their cheeks, and spread them with vermillion; but Mrs. Oxburn passed it off very well—had her face been less plaistered with red, she had too much constitutional audacity to have betrayed any thing like confusion.—Laughing thro’ her white teeth, she observed, “that though
“ the consequences of envy were indeed
“ destructive, she did suppose there must
“ be some foundation for the plague of
“ envy besides whim and imagination, and
“ that the disease must be *felt* before the
“ evil would appear; so, as this is the
“ case, (added she, with as much vanity
“ as *nonchalance*) I am safe enough—Hea-
“ ven forbid I should ever have the jaun-
“ dice of envy come over my com-
“ plexion! What horrid figures does this
“ nasty bile make of people?” Her eyes slyly glanced at her Grace, whose skin would resemble Paphian marble but for

the traces of that disorder, which a three years course of medicine had not been able entirely to remove——“ If bile (continued “ the insulter) *must* be the consequence of “ envy, I find its effects so disgusting, I “ will take care not to think better of any “ body than I do of myself; that having “ no excuse for the one, I may entirely “ avoid the other.”

Whilst this battledore and shuttlecock conversation passed amongst the ladies, Mr. Lexington was retired with the Duke, who had something to consult him about relating to the settlements, which were already in considerable forwardness, and perhaps the only business in the world that he could have particularly attended to on such a day as this, when, in every minute of absence from his adored Mary, was contained more pain than is to be found in the penance of a devotee, and more solitary moments than in the whole tedious existence of a lonely recluse.

This

This would have been an awful day of trial for Miss Montague, but that the passion of Lexington was equally distinguished by the excess of delicacy with which it was conducted, as by the vivacity of its expression; he knew exactly the sort of approaches that would be most pleasing to his divinity, and regulated his will by the chaste correctness of her own; his attentions were not assured, obtrusive, or particular, but marked with the three best insignias of a *real* passion, tenderness, respect, and immutability.

When he came back from being closeted with the Duke, he saw Miss Montague sitting down between his two sisters, who had been paying her great court ever since the Duchess called them to order by the retort courteous.

My Readers will guess, that when Mr. Lexington returned with the Duke, it was the most natural chance in the world that he should station himself not very far from

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the

the sofa which held the fair trio; it seemed indeed to be in his direct road to happiness, and he would neither have turned to the right or the left, if the Dukes had not impeded his haste, by asking him some question as he passed near her; and before he could answer her enquiries, which he was preparing to do with all imaginary brevity, the whole company were roused to observation, first, by the name of Lord Auberry, and next, by Lord Auberry himself.

It was impossible in this circle of friends to find any but pleased and satisfied countenances; whatever sentiments adverse to pleasure and satisfaction may have intruded into the hearts of some present, the mischief was there chained down, nor suffered to proceed further, not even to take a peep from the smiling eyes of Lord Francis, or conceal a smile on the docile features of Mrs. Oxburn. But however gay, however happy the faces that met Lord Auberry's

berry's approach, there was not one in the whole group more *gay*, more *happy* than his own.

Instead of appearing disordered, as for some weeks past had been his custom at all the dinners, balls, assemblies, and suppers, to which he was invited, on this *single* occasion nothing could be more correct than his *dress*, or more polite and collected than his *address*. His first compliments were carried to the Duchess, and who thought he made them very gracefully, and gave him an handsome reception.

The Duke did not think of his Lordship with much cordiality, but in his turn he followed her Grace's example, so that there was nothing omitted that the laws of good-breeding or hospitality could exact.

Mr. Lexington entertained no suspicion of Lord Auberry's good faith, or honourable intentions; he had heard with astonishment of his infidelity to Miss Montague, but this was an infidelity so acceptable

table to his heart, so advantageous to his views, that whilst he detested the treason, he could not hate the traitor.

Of one particular circumstance he was uninformed—the mean subterfuges of Lord Auberry's disavowals to the Duke and others, every one of which was a distinct link in the endless chain of his Lordship's inconsistencies. None of these had ever been permitted to reach the ear of Henry; all his friends were too much aware what consequence such a communication must have produced even to divulge that part of Lord Auberry's conduct, which was certainly the *most* reprehensible. Lexington did not quarrel with him for retreating from the woman to whom he looked up for the completion of his own felicity, but he would have cut his throat could he only have surmised that he had treated Miss Montague with so much *contempt* as to *deny* that he *ever* was attached to her. Fortunately ignorant of what would have made him his enemy, and too generous to harbour

bour ideas of distrust in his reception of Lord Auberry, he forgot that he had ever been his rival, but considered him as a man less happy than himself, and as his future relation, whose friendship he wished to cultivate

I have said that his Lordship's compliment to the Duchess was a short one—he passed from her Grace to Miss Montague, and with infinite recollection gave her joy on the approaching happy occasion.

Lord Auberry was entirely banished from her affections long before she ever heard the name of Lexington pronounced—and now that these affections were *entirely* devoted to another, and she saw his Lordship coming towards her with an air of the most perfect good-humour, she not only cordially forgave him in her own private thoughts for all his past transgressions, but the kindness of her innocent heart extended still further—and in answer to his Lordship's compliments of congratulations, it enabled her to reply with a smile
of

of ineffable sweetness, untinctured by reproach, that she hoped his prospects in a married life would be as happy and as brilliant as her own

The image of her masquerade acquaintance crossed her imagination at the moment, and she silently ejaculated—Oh! that she might be as prudent as she is amiable!—Oh, that she may be ~~Lady~~ Auberry!

Now, though it must be confessed that nothing could be more polite or encouraging than the good wishes which the harmonious voice of Mary meant for the ear of Lord Auberry, yet by some chance or other they either did not reach it, or else his thoughts were so perplexed, so distracted by the variety of other faces present, that instead of making the sort of answer she might have reasonably expected, not a single syllable did he utter, good, bad, or indifferent, but turned from her, and began to flirt with the always ready, always willing Mrs. Oxburn.

Dinner

Dinner being soon after announced, he gaily led her to the table, placing himself between her and Mrs. Tovee, *vis-a-vis* to Miss Montague, and of course Mr. Lexington.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

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